

AFTER AUGUST: CAUSES, RESULTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR

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**AFTER AUGUST: CAUSES, RESULTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS
OF THE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR**

by

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ABSTRACT

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AFTER AUGUST: CAUSES, RESULTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR

Introduction

The August war between Russia and Georgia is a watershed event in the post-Soviet history of the Eurasian geopolitical space. The war marks a significant departure from the foreign policy the Russian Federation had pursued since the collapse of the Soviet Union. By invading Georgia Russia, which in the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin had already shown a willingness to use its economic and energy leverage to pursue a restoration of its power, now showed a willingness to use military force to the same end. Guessing correctly that the Western reaction to the invasion would be limited in scope and only partially coherent, Russia then raised the stakes by almost immediately recognizing the independence of Georgia's two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus throwing down a diplomatic gauntlet alongside the military one.

How the West, and in particular the United States, responds to this crisis will play a large part in determining the geopolitical future of Eurasia. The war between Russia and Georgia has brought into stark focus the issues at stake here – from enlargement of NATO, to support for economic and democratic transformation, to the search for secure energy supplies for Europe, to strategic reach and access to geopolitically critical areas of the globe.

Our policy in Georgia will affect not only that country, but also other potential NATO members such as Ukraine and Azerbaijan; new NATO members with their own histories of subjugation by Russia; the NATO Alliance itself; and finally Russia and its relationship to the West. In short, what we do in Georgia in the near term will have

ripple effects throughout Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic space, an area critical to the security and prosperity of the United States. Writing shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Zbigniew Brzezinski characterized Eurasia as the chief geopolitical prize and asserted that “America’s global primacy is directly dependent upon how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained”¹. This is as true today as it was when it was written.

This paper will examine what happened in Georgia and why it happened, posit the meaning of these events, examine options for future U.S. policy in Georgia, and then determine how these might affect the region as a whole. In order to do this, the paper will be structured as follows. First, I will examine the strategic context of the situation and review the interests the United States has at stake in the region. Next, I will briefly review the Georgia’s geopolitical situation and the factors that led it to war with Russia; this is important in determining whether Russia’s invasion of Georgia was a discontinuous event or the first step in a future pattern of Russian behavior. Third, I will outline emerging trends in Russian geopolitical thought in order to attempt to provide a better understanding of Russia in its current incarnation as a geopolitical actor. Fourth, I will outline and analyze policy options for dealing with the aftermath of the war between Russia and Georgia and for the future security architecture of the Euro-Atlantic space. Fifth, I will choose the option among these that my research has led me to believe is the best and explain why. And finally, I will discuss other, related factors that impact Euro-Atlantic security and suggest how these might be coordinated with the policy option chosen.

Strategic Context

So where does Georgia – a small country with a difficult history and a suddenly uncertain future – fit into the debate on the future of Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic security? Even before the war with Russia, American and European policy-makers understood that Georgia was an area where their interests and values intersected. As a transit country for the only route to market for Caspian hydrocarbons not controlled by Russia; as a major contributor to coalition operations, especially in Iraq, where it maintained the third-largest contingent; as a much-used overflight route and refueling point for U.S. aircraft bound for Afghanistan; and as a vibrant market economy and a country imperfectly but sincerely attempting to plant democracy its rocky, post-Soviet political soil – Georgia mattered and the attention it received from the West spoke to that fact.

The Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Georgian territory brought Georgia even closer to the forefront of the conversation on the future security of Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic space. Russia chose Georgia to demonstrate its intent to return to the world stage as a major power and to dictate terms of the security architecture along its periphery. In doing so it directly challenged Western interests in Georgia and the wider Eurasian region by calling into question the security of non-Russian energy corridors to Europe, ending – at least for the time being – Georgia’s contributions to coalition operations and bringing divisions within NATO over the future direction of the Alliance to the surface.

But how much does all this matter? Given the multiple, complex problems facing the United States today – a global financial crisis and economic slowdown, an unstable, probably nuclear North Korea, an Iran seemingly bent on acquiring a nuclear capability,

and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – how much energy and how many resources can the United States dedicate to ensuring the future security of Eurasia? This question is especially important since Russia seems bent on contesting American engagement along its periphery and many of our European allies seem to lack either the will or the capability to counter this Russian resurgence.

Here we may return to Brzezinski. His focus on the geopolitical importance of Eurasia for America's future results from the geographically axial position of the Eurasian landmass as well as its innate political and economic power. Noting that Eurasia is home to 75% of the world's population and produces 75% of global GDP as well as 60% of global energy, Brzezinski concludes that continued American presence in Eurasia is a geopolitical imperative.² And here NATO plays a critical role, since it “entrenches American political influence and military power directly on the Eurasian mainland”.³ American power and presence in Eurasia has a stabilizing influence, so much so that an end to American engagement there would produce massive international instability.⁴ More recently, other authors have also asserted the centrality of Eurasia to American interests. In 2007 R. Craig Nation defined six critical U.S. interests there: access to energy resources; fighting terrorism and addressing its root causes; maintaining regional stability; managing China's rise; channeling the ambition of other regional actors like Iran and India; and promoting Russia's democratic transition and on the basis of success in this endeavor working with Russia on common interests.⁵

For the purposes of this paper, I will define Eurasia as the entire Eurasian landmass from the British Isles in the west to Asia's North Pacific coast in the east. I will define the Euro-Atlantic space as the geopolitical space occupied by those countries that

are members of the European Union, NATO, or both. The area where these spaces intersect – where NATO and the EU end and the rest of Eurasia begins – is where the threat of instability is greatest, but also where the opportunity for transformation of the entire Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space (“from Vancouver to Vladivostok”) most readily presents itself.

America's Regional Interests

Before examining our regional policy in the wake of the war between Russia and Georgia, it will be instructive to examine in greater detail what interests the United States has at stake in this area. With the ideas of Brzezinski and Nation in mind, for the purposes of this paper I will define these as access to energy supplies, continuation of the security contributions and defense reform efforts of regional states, support for the political and economic transition processes underway there, and setting conditions for Russia's own political and economic transformation, however far into the future that may be.

The Energy Dimension of European Security

Russia is uniquely positioned to supply Europe with both oil and gas and to be a transit country for oil and gas to Europe from the Caspian Basin and Central Asia. The country holds the world's largest natural gas reserves, the second largest coal reserves, the eighth largest oil reserves; it is the world's largest exporter of natural gas and the second largest oil exporter⁶. A Russia that used its energy wealth responsibly could be a valuable partner to the West, especially Western Europe. However, instead of partnering with the West to maximize the efficiency of hydrocarbon extraction and delivery to the market, Russia has increasingly shut out Western energy firms from the Russian market, used its

energy leverage to pursue political goals vis-à-vis its neighbors and acted as an erratic and unreliable supplier of energy to Europe. It is therefore in the interest of the West – and especially Western Europe – to support a greater diversity of routes to market for Caspian and Central Asian energy, and here the Caucasus plays a key role.

The role of energy in European security and the roles played by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine in delivering energy to Europe have taken on renewed importance given the events of the last half year. Russia's invasion of Georgia was in part designed to underline the vulnerability of the one remaining energy corridor from the Caspian Sea to Europe that is not under Russian control. Russian aircraft overflew and dropped bombs perilously close to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Russian forces destroyed a bridge on the Baku-Poti rail line, another critical corridor for Caspian oil to reach the world market. More recently Russia's gas dispute with Ukraine, which completely cut off gas supplies to Europe for almost two weeks in the middle of the winter, further underlined Russia's willingness to use energy as a weapon in political disputes regardless of the economic or human cost.

Russia's behavior stems from the fact that Russia views its energy wealth not simply as a natural resource to be exploited for economic gain, but as an instrument of state power. Indeed, the Russian energy sector is tightly bound to the Russian state in a mutually supporting manner that blurs the lines between political, economic and security issues in Russian policy and ultimately works to the detriment of consumers of Russian energy and of Russia itself. The role of the energy sector in Russia's economy is huge: energy accounted for 30% of Russian gross domestic product and 65% of exports in 2006⁷ and in that same year the share of the Russian state budget funded by taxes on oil

and gas production was 49%⁸. A single firm, Gazprom – which by 2006 was the world’s third largest company – provided 25 % of Russian government revenues⁹. The negative effect of this lack of diversity, especially given the historically unpredictable changes in the price of oil, is obvious.

The large share of the Russian economy represented by the energy sector has led the Russian government to take an increasingly active role in that sector. Instead of being content to allow the energy sector to operate according to market principles and contribute to the Russian economy simply by providing jobs and tax revenues, the Russian government has increasingly sought to ensure that Russia’s energy wealth serves the state’s political as well as economic goals. During Putin’s presidency Russia embarked on a program designed to bring the energy sector and other industries designated as strategically significant under the control of the state: between December 2004 and February 2006 13 major companies in the hydrocarbons, aircraft or automotive industries were effectively renationalized¹⁰. The Russian government currently owns over 50% of the shares of the energy giant Gazprom¹¹ and the state’s share of crude production had risen from 16% in 2000 to about 50% by late 2007¹². According to Lilia Shevtsova this situation – where the lines between economic and political power have become so blurred – explains why Russia “so aggressively pursues economic interests, considering them political tools”.¹³

The disadvantages of this situation to Russia’s neighbors – who often find the prices they pay for Russian energy directly tied to their support for Russian political goals – and to European consumers of Russian energy – who often find their supplies disrupted by spats between Russia and its neighbors – are obvious. However, the disadvantages to

Russia itself are also considerable and make themselves felt in rising levels of corruption, lack of economic diversification and increasingly unsustainable energy production due to lack of access to Western energy technology. The important role of energy in the Russian economy and the expanded role of the Russian state in the energy sector have corresponded to an expansion of the government itself and a sharp rise in official corruption. Russian statistics show a 10% in increase in the number of civil servants in 2005 alone, and the Russian Academy of Sciences estimates that there are now 1.5 million civil servants in Russia, compared to 600,000 for the entire USSR in 1990.¹⁴ As the bureaucracy grows and the amount of money passing through the hands of the state grows with it, the temptation for bureaucrats to engage in corruption rises as well. Transparency International has noted a significant and sustained increase in corruption in this decade. Indeed, in one year alone – between 2004 and 2005 – Russia fell from 94th to 143rd on the organization's index of perceived corruption, and by 2008 Russia had slipped further downward to 147th.¹⁵

Within the Russian energy sector Gazprom is the favored champion – indeed, Putin has called it “the holy of holies”.¹⁶ Unfortunately the heavy hand of the Russian state has stifled growth in other sectors and has crowded out other players – especially Western firms with superior technology – in the energy sector itself, making the long-term prospects of the energy champion Gazprom uncertain. Saddled with aging infrastructure – 89% of oil equipment and 60% of industrial plants belonging to Gazprom are obsolete¹⁷ – and over \$25 billion in debt even before last fall’s decline in oil prices¹⁸, Gazprom desperately needs foreign partners to provide capital and technology needed to develop new sources of oil and gas and to upgrade its infrastructure. However, the often

arbitrary and capricious policies of the Russian government in the energy sector will make it more difficult for Gazprom to attract and keep foreign partners, especially if the price of oil remains relatively low by the standards of the past several years.

Gazprom today controls neither the technology nor the capital required to develop new fields, many of which are in remote locations with harsh climactic and soil conditions, making exploration and distribution especially difficult. A requirement for foreign assistance is not unique to Russia: the U.K., Norway and Canada also developed their hydrocarbon resources with 50% of the market share belonging to overseas participants¹⁹. Unless Gazprom and its sponsors in the Russian government are willing to accept a similar arrangement, Putin’s “holy of holies” may prove unable to sustain its contributions to the Russian state budget.

In summary, Russia today exhibits many of the markers of a “petrostate”: a merger between power and business; a rentier class living on oil and gas dividends; systemic corruption; the domination of large monopolies controlled by the bureaucracy; a susceptibility to external economic shocks; state intervention in the economy; a growing gap between rich and poor; and a risk of “Dutch Disease”, in which a focus on the development of energy resources leads to stagnation in other economic sectors²⁰. The petrostate phenomenon means Russia’s long-term prospects as a reliable energy provider for Europe are not good if it fails to reform. Additionally, the blurring of the lines between the seats of economic and political power in Russia means that Russia often uses its energy power to pursue political ends, further eroding the reliability of its energy deliveries to Europe. For these reasons, it is in the interest of Europe and the United States to aggressively seek to develop alternative sources of energy to meet

Europe's demands, and here Georgia offers both an example of how to resist Russian pressure and a key link in the alternative delivery chain for Caspian and Central Asian energy to Europe.

Georgia and Ukraine: Energy Examples and Roles as Transit Countries

As the first post-Soviet country outside the Baltics to aggressively pursue integration with the West, Georgia was one of the first to feel the pain of Russia's politicized energy policy. By November 2006 Gazprom was publicly toying with the idea of raising the price for the gas it sold Georgia from \$110 to \$230 per thousand cubic meters. Georgian President Saakashvili took the issue to the court of public opinion, addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg and pointing out that Georgia's more compliant neighbors were paying between \$65 and \$110 per thousand cubic meters for the same Russian gas²¹. When Russia persisted in its attempts to raise the gas price for Georgia, the latter began to seek energy independence from Russia by purchasing from Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran. Through a series of bilateral and trilateral agreements with these countries that involved swapping electricity with no cash payment from any side, Georgia was able to significantly strengthen its ability to resist Russian pressure.²² By 2007 Georgia has shifted more than 80% of its gas imports to non-Russian sources and was paying about \$235 per thousand cubic meters for Russian gas –close to the same price paid by Russia's European customers²³.

Ukraine's experience with Russian gas supplies was similar to Georgia's but, for a variety of reasons, the outcome was different. Ukraine's Orange Revolution in late 2004 – the second of the “Color Revolutions” that brought Western-oriented governments to power, the first being Georgia's Rose Revolution - was followed almost

immediately by Gazprom's announcement that it would triple the price Ukraine paid for Russian gas. Despite a previous bilateral agreement that guaranteed a price of \$50 per thousand cubic meters through 2013, Gazprom raised the price to \$150. In December of 2005, Gazprom again raised the price to \$230 and announced that the new price would be effective the next month²⁴. When Ukraine resisted paying the higher price, Russia cut off supplies to Ukraine, which also affected Russia's European customers since the majority of Russian gas delivered to Europe transits Ukraine. After four days a compromise was reached and gas deliveries were restored. But subsequent years have showed compromise between Russia and Ukraine to be short-lived, as the dynamic of 2006 has been repeated several times since, with the most serious instance occurring in January of 2009, when supplies were disrupted for almost two weeks.

Georgia and Ukraine present two instances of the politicization of Russian energy policy, with two differing outcomes. Georgia, which generates a significant amount of electricity through hydro power and which is linked by pipeline to Azerbaijan, was able to move quickly to lessen its dependence on Russian gas. Ukraine, on the other hand, is tied to Russia via pipeline in much the same way Georgia is tied to Azerbaijan, so it had less maneuver room. Complicating the situation for Ukraine is the fact that Russia and Europe both depend on it as a transit country for Russian gas deliveries, meaning bilateral disagreements between Russia and Ukraine quickly bring in other countries as those countries begin to feel the pain of interrupted gas deliveries.

An Alternative Energy Policy

As it was punishing its neighbors for their independent-minded policies, Russia was attempting to use its position as a transit country for Caspian and Central Asian

hydrocarbons to extract maximum economic advantage for itself. In 2006, Russia was importing Central Asian gas – primarily from Turkmenistan – for less than \$50 per thousand cubic meters, while selling its own gas to its European customers at prices averaging \$230²⁵. This type of price gouging eventually proved unsustainable as competition from other customers for Central Asian energy forced Russia to pay higher prices for it, but this behavior along with Russia’s record of using energy as a weapon in political disputes serve to illustrate the fact that Russia seeks to be the dominant energy power in Eurasia and that it seeks to use its energy dominance to pursue political and security objectives as well as economic ones.

Here it is certainly not in the interest of the United States to allow Russia to succeed. Even if Russia were a reliable and benevolent energy power, which it certainly is not, it would be in the interest of the West to pursue alternative sources to Russian energy and alternative routes to market for non-Russian energy – this is simply diversification of supply, which is sound economic and energy policy. Russia’s behavior makes this imperative that much more critical, and in the quest for alternative sources of energy Georgia and Azerbaijan stand out in importance.

Brzezinski singles out Azerbaijan as geopolitically critical in this respect, since it is the “cork in the bottle” for Caspian and Central Asian hydrocarbons and because its subordination to Russia would render the independence of the Central Asian States nearly meaningless, in both the political and economic sense²⁶. Azerbaijan is also of course an important energy producer in its own right. Georgia’s importance stems from its position between Azerbaijan and the West. Through Georgia, pipelines can carry oil and gas from the Caspian and Central Asia to Turkey and from there directly into European Union

countries. Projects like the European Union-supported Nabucco Pipeline suddenly looked economically imperative as the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute cut off supplies to a number of European countries in January 2009. Russia understands Georgia's critical role as a transit country for non-Russian energy and this is part of the reason for its continued attempts to destabilize Georgia, which unlike Azerbaijan has been very assertive in pursuing its pro-Western course. Well before Russia invaded Georgia in August of 2008, energy analysts were warning that "if Georgia collapses in turmoil, investors will not put up the money for a bypass pipeline and Russia will be able to maintain its pipeline monopoly"²⁷.

The Russian desire to marginalize or end altogether the role that its neighbors play in the delivery of energy to Europe drives it to relentlessly pursue energy projects that cut them out and deliver energy directly to European customers, even if those projects are not economically advantageous. The proposed North Stream Pipeline under the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany is an example. Russia chose to pursue North Stream at a cost of \$7.5 billion over another branch of the Yamal-Europe pipeline at a cost of \$2.5 billion that would also link it to Europe – but North Stream bypasses Poland, Belarus and Baltics, and that is its real attraction to the Russian leadership. In future arguments over gas prices, it can punish those countries by cutting off their supplies without affecting supplies to Europe²⁸.

So a continuation of Russia's role as an energy power that uses its energy to pursue political and security objectives and that attempts to prevent the emergence of alternative energy corridors to Europe is decidedly not in the interests of Europe or the United States. In pursuing alternative sources of energy Georgia and Azerbaijan stand

out as important partners and Ukraine is notable for its current role as a transit route for the majority of Russian gas that reaches Europe. The United States and the European Union would do well to remember these facts and the interests we have at stake as we fashion future energy policy vis-à-vis Russia her neighbors. To the extent that they are economically viable, we should continue to support alternative energy routes to Europe and we should insist that Russia abide by fair trade practices in both its deliveries of energy and in access to its domestic market for foreign firms, neither of which it has done consistently to date.

American Security Interests in the Former Soviet Union

The war between Russia and Georgia damaged American security interests in the region; the failure to craft a coherent policy response to the war and its aftermath could further erode our strategic foothold there, with disastrous effects for American interests throughout Eurasia. Russia's attack on Georgia ended the 2000-strong Georgian commitment to Iraq and delayed or possibly prevented altogether the planned deployment of some 400 Georgian soldiers to Afghanistan. Given the fact that the Georgian contingent in Iraq controlled an entire province of the country – a mission that now must be done by U.S. troops – and the fact that more troops for Afghanistan are urgently required and apparently not forthcoming from traditional allies, the disruption of these deployments degraded the effectiveness of both operations.

Georgia and Azerbaijan are also part of an important and much-used overflight corridor for Afghanistan, and both provide gas-and-go services to U.S. aircraft. Keeping this corridor open is of critical importance, especially given the recent problems with the supply routes from Pakistan and the news that the Kyrgyz government has decided to

close the United States air base at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. The fact that this announcement was made at the same time as the Russian government intimated that it would consider allowing coalition forces to use its territory to access Afghanistan makes the Russian role in the Kyrgyz decision fairly obvious. Russia's intent here is similar to its intent in its energy policy: it desires to become the sole corridor for access to Afghanistan. This will gain it "credit" with the West for supporting an operation that is in its interest in any case, it will ensure there are no permanent U.S. bases in the former Soviet Union and it will allow Russia to close the corridor, or threaten to do so, if the United States takes positions that anger Russia on other issues.

So the corridor through Georgia and Azerbaijan- and from there across the Caspian to Turkmenistan – will become even more important to the success of the mission in Afghanistan. And access to these countries also provides a chance to offset the loss of the base at Manas. As far back as 2004 Turkmenistan, which generally pursues a policy more independent of Russia than do its neighbors, was offering the U.S. use of its air base at Mary; and use of the base at Nasosnaya, Azerbaijan, might also be an option. But continued access to Afghanistan is not the only reason for continued U.S. engagement in these countries. Both Georgia and Ukraine lie just north of Iran, and given Iran's current political trajectory and apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons, a period of regional instability is likely to persist. While it is not the place of this paper to advocate policy options for Iran, it is an inescapable conclusion that continued access to Georgia and Azerbaijan enhances future U.S. strategic flexibility.

The final reasons that regional countries are important to American security have to do with internal processes underway there, processes designed to jettison the legacy of

the Soviet military system and transform to Western-style and NATO interoperable defense establishments. Despite its defeat in the war with Russia, Georgia has probably made probably the most progress in this area and provides the best example of the mutual advantages accrued by both NATO and aspirant countries in this process. Georgia's defense reform process began in earnest in 2002, when the United States – with Russian acquiescence – began the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP). GTEP was designed to enable the Georgian military – at that time scarcely worthy of the name – to regain control over the Pankisi Gorge, an area of northern Georgia along the Russian border where Chechen separatists were concentrated. Russia, having recently re-launched its war to subdue the Chechen rebels, had stridently criticized Georgia and even bombed the Pankisi itself.

By 2008 the Georgian military had long since gained control over the Pankisi and, as mentioned, had 2000 troops in Iraq and was preparing to send a contingent of 400 to Afghanistan. It also supported the NATO mission to Kosovo from 1999-2008 with a 175-strong force and had previously provided a 50-man contingent to Afghanistan to enhance security for the 2004 presidential elections there. But its contributions to coalition operations did not represent the sum total of Georgian defense reform efforts. Georgia was also the first country to sign an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, doing so in 2004. Following Georgia's lead, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Moldova eventually signed IPAPs.

The IPAP process, launched at the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, is intended for countries with the political will and resolve to deepen their cooperation with NATO. By 2008 Georgia had made progress in all areas of reform contained in the IPAP: defense,

security and military issues; public information; science and environment; civil emergency planning; and administrative, protective security and resource issues. Clearly, the defense reform efforts guided by the IPAP process are in the interest of the United States and its European allies. Not only do these efforts yield military forces that are more interoperable with Western militaries, but the process of reform itself results in defense establishments that are better-managed, that adhere to Western norms and that therefore contribute to both internal and regional stability in the countries where they are underway.

Support for Political and Economic Reform Processes

It is generally accepted that the spread of democratic and market economic principles leads to increased stability and security in countries where the historical and societal foundations for these principles have been laid. In this light, it was not surprising that among the post-Soviet countries the Baltics, which had long exposure to European political and economic norms, made relatively quick political and economic progress, whereas the Central Asian States, with no history of exposure to Western norms and a long history of subjugation by Russia, remain adrift in their post-Soviet transition processes. But between these two extremes there was a middle ground made up of countries closer to the West geographically and historically than Central Asia but not close enough that their transition to Western-style polities and economies was a certain outcome. Out of this group of “middle-ground” states, Georgia and Ukraine distinguished themselves by their popular movements – dubbed the Rose Revolution and the Orange Revolution respectively – that brought reform-oriented governments to power. Suddenly it seemed that there was indeed a chance for countries without an

extensive political and economic pedigree to move out of the shadow of their Russian and Soviet-dominated past and approach western standards of political and economic behavior.

But the transition has not been smooth. On the political front, both Georgia and Ukraine have suffered recently. Georgia was recently dropped from the list of electoral democracies by Freedom House and was listed only “partly free” because of a crackdown on street protests in November 2007 and irregularities in its 2008 elections²⁹, while the political in-fighting between Ukraine’s two reformist factions has become notorious and destabilizing. These difficulties illustrate that both Georgia and Ukraine are works in progress and that both have far to go before they can be classified as success stories. But we should not confuse the lack of success in reform with a failure of will to reform. Despite their recent political troubles, both Georgia and Ukraine welcome international observation of their elections and these elections are generally deemed by international observers as free and fair. In Georgia’s latest elections, held in May 2008 to select the parliament, there were observers from 63 international organizations with the total number of international observers exceeding 1800³⁰. While it noted a number of problems in the elections, the report from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights concluded, “Overall, these elections clearly offered an opportunity for the Georgian people to choose their representatives from amongst a wide array of choices. The authorities and other political stakeholders made efforts to conduct these elections in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments”³¹. Russia’s 2008 Presidential elections, by contrast, were characterized as neither free nor fair by the Council of Europe – the lone Western

organization to observe the elections, since the restrictions placed on other organizations by the Russian government caused them to cancel their observation missions.

In the area of economic reform, Georgia stands out in relation to its post-Soviet neighbors. Largely devoid of natural resources, Georgia has relied on its strategic location and on a series of liberalizing economic reforms to underpin its economic growth, which was 10% in 2006 and 12% in 2007 before falling to under 7% in 2008 due to the war with Russia and the global economic slowdown³². Indeed, according to the World Bank, Georgia has been one of the leading economic reformers in the world over the last several years, and is now number 15 in the world in ease of doing business, ahead of Germany (25), France (31) and Russia (120), among others. Here Azerbaijan has also made significant progress, coming in at number 33, while Ukraine has lagged, placing 145th³³.

Setting Conditions for Russia's Transition

The success of the political and economic reform processes underway in the post-Soviet space – to the extent they produce stable polities and economies governed by law – is clearly in the interest of the United States. Although stable polities and economies governed by law would appear to be in the interest of Russia as well, Russia has defined these reforms as threats to its security and has attempted at every turn to undermine them. The Russian leadership insists instead that it has a right to a zone of privileged interests along its periphery, and that it should be the final arbiter of the political and economic future of the states in this zone. This fact leads us to the final – and perhaps most important – of the Western interests in the former Soviet Union: setting the conditions for Russia's own transition.

While at this moment speaking of Russia's transition to a system in conformity with Western political and economic norms may seem premature, allowing Russia to construct an exclusive sphere of influence, inside which it constrains the sovereignty of its neighbors, is a sure way to ensure the time of Russia's own transition is delayed significantly and possibly indefinitely. Ending Russia's ambitions to once again become an imperial-type power in Eurasia is critical to transforming Russia into a responsible player in the international arena. As long as Russia believes it has a chance to re-establish an exclusive zone of interest – a 19th Century concept – it will continue to behave in 19th Century ways. As Brzezinski says, “Russian recovery is essential to Russia’s democratization and eventual Europeanization. But any recovery of its imperial potential would be inimical to both of these objectives”³⁴.

And here Brzezinski argues that Ukraine is especially important, since its continued independence sets conditions for Russia's transformation, since “without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire”³⁵ Robert Kagan agrees, writing that “it is worth contemplating what the world would look like, what Europe would look like, if democratic movements in Ukraine and Georgia failed or were forcibly suppressed and the two nations became autocracies with close ties to Moscow”³⁶.

This unfortunately is precisely Russia's goal. The decentralization of political and economic control represented by Western-style reform is extraordinarily threatening to the current Russian government. As discussed previously, Russia's leaders have staked the restoration of Russia's standing in the world on a close association between political and economic power and a centralization of both. Unable to conceive of a world in which a Russia that decentralizes power internally is able to compete with the West,

and unwilling to imagine a future of cooperation with the West based upon shared systems and values, Russia denounces political and economic reform as a Western attempt to undermine and destabilize it. Until recently, Russia's oil-fueled prosperity enabled Russia's more assertive – even aggressive - external behavior at the same time as it stifled any incentive for reform at home. However, the collapse of the oil price accompanied by the global economic slowdown has depleted Russia's currency reserves, caused a massive run on the Russian stock market³⁷ and made its economic future more uncertain than ever. These conditions may provide the incentive for Russia to behave more responsibly externally and to undertake reform at home. As former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar said, "The lower the reserves, the higher the quality of the decision-making process"³⁸.

So American regional interests can be broadly defined as access to energy supplies, continuation of the security contributions and defense reform efforts of regional states, support for the political and economic transition processes underway there, and setting conditions for Russia's own political and economic transformation. In pursuit of these interests the states of Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan play key roles and their continued independence and sovereignty are critical. Each of these countries contributes to our interests in different ways and all are not contributors in every area mentioned – Azerbaijan's democratic credentials, for example, are essentially non-existent – but taken together their continued sovereignty and partnership with the West are critical. And among these three countries, Georgia is the one where our current policy has been tested the most and where our regional objectives are most at risk.

Whether America succeeds or fails in the pursuit of its interests in the former Soviet Union, and indeed how we are seen to act in pursuit of them, will affect our relationship with a number of our European allies, with NATO as an organization and of course with Russia. Here again Brzezinski provides a glimpse of what success might look like, when he says that our central geostrategic goal is “to consolidate through a more genuine transatlantic partnership the U.S. bridgehead on the Eurasian continent so that an enlarging Europe can become a more viable springboard for projecting into Eurasia the international democratic and cooperative order”³⁹. The August war between Russia and Georgia marked the largest setback to this goal so far, and how we respond will play a large role in determining whether or not we someday achieve Brzezinski’s vision.

The Russo-Georgian War: Causes, Effects and Meaning

Whether by design, by chance or by some intersection of the two, Georgia has now assumed a central role in the future of U.S. policy in Eurasia. The August war represents a challenge to America’s regional interests: it caused serious if not irrevocable disruption of Georgia’s NATO accession drive (and if Georgia fails there is little prospect for others like Ukraine or Azerbaijan to succeed), provoked the most serious crisis in U.S.-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War, has the potential to ignite heretofore dormant ethnic conflict elsewhere in the region including within Russia itself, threatened the security of Europe’s energy supply, called NATO’s credibility into question and deepened existing rifts within the Alliance. Before we discuss future U.S. policy options in the wake of the war, it will be instructive to look at the roots of the conflict and its likely meaning. Was this an inevitable war or could it have been

prevented? Does it mark the beginning of a newly aggressive Russian posture in Europe or was it a one-off caused by peculiarities and particular instabilities in the three-way relationship among Georgia, its secessionist regions and Russia? Answering these questions will help put the war into its proper context and will allow us to draw the appropriate lessons for U.S. policy.

Pre-Soviet History

It is often said that the Caucasus produces more history than it can consume; in Georgia's case this maxim has been true more often than not in its history. Located at a strategic crossroads between Europe and Asia, Georgia and its predecessor polities often found themselves fighting invasion – first from Arab armies during the Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th Centuries A.D., and later from both Persia and Ottoman Turkey. This situation led Georgian King Irakli II to pursue a strategic alliance with Russia to better enable him to resist his southern neighbors. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768 Irakli agreed to fight a Turkish advance into the Caucasus on the promise from Russia that it would support Georgia against Turkish reprisals, which it failed to do. Irakli then decided that he needed written guarantees from Russia to ensure this situation did not repeat itself. The result was the 1783 Treaty of Grigorievsk, under which Georgia recognized the protectorate of the Russian Tsar in exchange for three promises: “the guarantee of the throne to Irakli and his descendants, the independence of the Georgian Church, and the defense of Georgia in case of attack from one of the Muslim empires”⁴⁰. None of these promises were kept: in 1795 Georgia was attacked by Persia and Russia failed to respond, and in 1801 the eastern Georgian kingdom was annexed to Russia. From this point Russia appointed the Georgian ruler, and the Georgian church soon lost

its independence as well.

As Russia began to formally incorporate Georgia into the Russian Empire, Russians were surprised by the highly-developed sense of national identity - based upon a common religion and language and a sense of shared history - they found among Georgians⁴¹. As a state, Georgia traces its history to 978 A.D., when “Sakartvelo” - “Home of the Georgians” - was formed with the unification of the eastern Georgian and Abkhazian Kingdoms through dynastic succession; the emirate of Tbilisi, the last remnant of Arab rule, was incorporated into the kingdom as its capital in 1122⁴².

After the incorporation of the eastern Georgian kingdom in the late 18th Century, Russia began a campaign to bring the western Georgian provinces under Russian control as well. This campaign saw active participation by armies from eastern Georgia, and one of the campaign’s outcomes was the subjugation of Abkhazia – which had once again become independent when eastern Georgia was annexed by Russia – and the deportation of up to half its population to Turkey⁴³, setting the stage for future ethnic tensions between Georgians and Abkhazians.

Soviet History

The sudden collapse of the Russian Empire 1917 and the resulting chaos of civil war gave Georgia a chance to reassert its independence, and this it did. In May 1918 Georgia declared independence, becoming the first of the Caucasus countries to do so. It was also the last to submit to incorporation into the Soviet Union, an incorporation enforced by the 11th Red Army in 1921. It was during the Soviet period that the seeds for

Georgia's future ethnic conflicts were planted – sometimes as an intentional part of Soviet policy and sometimes unintentionally by well-meaning Soviet ethnographers trying to overlay a nation-state structure on the ethnic patchwork that is the Caucasus.

The revolutionaries building the Soviet Union saw their creation as fundamentally different from the Russian Empire, but were nevertheless determined to regain as much of the land of the empire as possible. An imperial construct that offered non-Russian lands little to no official status or autonomy would belie the progressive and indeed often utopian goals of the revolution. Subjects to the new state had to be seen to have joined of their own volition and had to have – at least in the legal sense – a substantial degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, the stability of the new Soviet state was paramount, and the old Russian idea that such a sprawling, multi-ethnic polity had to be ruled from a strong center survived. These two ideas –so obviously in conflict with one another – both found their expression in the Soviet constitution.

The result was that the constitution and the ethno-federal policies that it gave rise to were “centralist in content, federal in form” – with each unit being delegated a level of autonomy and privileges according to its status and perceived level of national development⁴⁴. In the Caucasus, this meant that Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were eventually given the status of union republics, *de jure* on a par with Russia in the new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Abkhazia also initially enjoyed the status of a union republic in a treaty relationship with Georgia until 1931, when Soviet authorities decided to subordinate it to the latter⁴⁵. At this point Abkhazia became an Autonomous Soviet

Socialist Republic (ASSR) – or one level lower on the “ethno-federal ladder” than Georgia. Within Georgia the region of Adjara also was designated an ASSR, and South Ossetia was designated an Autonomous Oblast’ – or one level lower still on the ladder.

The complexity of this model is obvious; to an extent it represented a sincere attempt to account for the perceived level of national awareness and development of the national ideal in each subject of the U.S.S.R. Georgia, as an ancient nation with a long and relatively stable history of statehood, was given union republic status. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara, all of which were deemed to have lower levels of development of national consciousness and which had for large parts of their history been ruled by Tbilisi, were made part of the Georgian republic. This dynamic was being played out all over the new Soviet Union, not least in Russia, where even today there are 89 subjects of the Russian Federation, the vast majority of which still retain the status and relationship vis-à-vis the center that was established under the Soviet constitution. In part, the insertion of ethnic sub-units into union republics was an honest attempt to define the ethnic and national mosaic of the Soviet Union in political and legal terms.

But there was another, less benign reason for inserting ethnically-based sub units into union republics. As mentioned previously, the stability and viability of the Soviet state was paramount. The concern with stability became an obsession after the rise of Josef Stalin to the position of Soviet premier and ethno-federal policies of the period reflected this. Stalin’s ethno-federal policies had two overriding objectives: to tightly bind the union republics to the center and to ensure that any union republic that actually tried to use the right of secession guaranteed it by the Soviet constitution would find itself subject to fracturing as its ethnically-defined sub-units demanded their own autonomy or

independence. To achieve these objectives, Stalin's policies ensured that the governmental structures of the union republics were given no actual autonomy or real political power; their authority was restricted to cultural and social spheres. These policies also used national delimitation to create sources of dissent, especially among Caucasian peoples. Thus, borders were intentionally drawn - or in some cases redrawn - in such a way not to correspond with ethnic realities.⁴⁶ Chistoph Zuercher summarizes Stalin's policies in the Caucasus as follows, "In all three South Caucasus union republics, 'foreign' autonomous republics or autonomous oblasts were instituted as counterweights to any possible nationalist politics on the part of the respective union republic"⁴⁷.

While these policies may have worked to preserve the stability of the Soviet state while it existed, as it entered its death throes their destabilizing effect became apparent. As mentioned earlier, under the Soviet constitution union republics like Georgia had the nominal right of secession from the U.S.S.R., but political entities below the level of union republic – such as the Abkhaz A.S.S.R or the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast' – had neither the right of secession from their union republics nor from the U.S.S.R. Therefore, a union republic that decided to exercise its right of secession would by law carry all of its sub-units with it, even if they desired to remain within the Soviet Union. As the rise of national consciousness around the Soviet Union began to threaten the integrity of the Soviet state, the government moved in April 1990 to try to stabilize the situation by amending the constitution to allow A.S.S.R.s and Autonomous Oblast's to elect through referendum to remain in the USSR; this was conceived by the center as a brake on independence movements. In the event, the Soviet Union collapsed before the law could be applied⁴⁸. When in August 1991 the leaders of the Russian, Ukrainian and

Belarusian S.S.R.s signed an agreement withdrawing their republics from the U.S.S.R., the other union republics seceded in quick succession.

For Georgia this was a welcome development. Georgia had in fact already declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 9 April 1991, but this declaration was largely unenforceable until Russia, Ukraine and Belarus left the union. Georgia had been brought into the Soviet Union by force in 1921 and – despite the fact that their country produced such Soviet era leaders as Josef Stalin, Lavrenti Beria and Eduard Shevardnadze – the majority of Georgians chafed under what they considered Russian domination. On multiple occasions during the period of Soviet rule Georgians flooded the streets of Tbilisi to demand that their small nation be allowed to leave the USSR: the result on each occasion was that “Red Army tanks rolled out of the barracks and crushed the protestors’ claim to freedom”⁴⁹. So the chance to exercise real independence was one the Georgian government rapidly seized.

But doing so brought the government – a nationalist movement elected in May 1990 under the leadership of Georgian literary critic and Soviet dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia – into an escalating and ever-more dangerous clash of ideas and wills with some of its subordinate units. After all of the union republics of the Soviet Union became independent in 1991, three Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (Abkhazia, Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh) and one Autonomous Oblast’ (South Ossetia) also declared independence but were denied international recognition⁵⁰. But the denial of international recognition did not suppress the national sentiment on the part of these would-be states, and all three eventually became sites of wars of secession.

It is the two Georgian wars – in Abkhazia and South Ossetia - that are of interest to us here. In one sense, Georgia always contained the seeds of ethnic conflict. Throughout its history it had always been a multi-ethnic state⁵¹ and had at times fragmented into smaller polities only to reunite later. Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov called Georgia “the little empire”, meaning by this that Georgia was a microcosm of the USSR itself and that any attempt at top-down unification would only result in bottom-up fragmentation⁵². But there were two other reasons that ethno-political tension in Georgia exploded into violence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The first, already discussed, was Soviet ethno-federal policy, which gave union republics nominal but not actual political power while seeding each union republic with ethnically-defined sub-units. But even this dynamic did not make war unavoidable. The second and most important reason for the wars of secession in Georgia was a series of uncompromising nationalist policies on the part of the Georgian, Abkhazian and South Ossetian governments, exacerbated by Russian support for Georgia’s separatist regions.

Post-Soviet Wars in Georgia

So Soviet policy set conditions for ethnic conflict in Georgia, but immediate catalyst for the wars themselves was the nationalism unleashed in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Tension between Georgians and Abkhaz had long been a feature of the relationship, as had tacit Russian support for the Abkhaz side, even as far back as the days of the Russian Empire. Interestingly though, the first region in Georgia to erupt into civil war was South Ossetia, where little history of ethnic tension or ethnic conflict between Ossetes and Georgians had previously existed.

Within the borders of the Autonomous Oblast' of South Ossetia, Ossetes comprised 66% of the population and Georgians 29%⁵³, with interaction - and even intermarriage – between the two communities common. But the amiable relations between the two were increasingly threatened by national prejudice from both sides as the writ of the Soviet state began to wane and thereby create room for expressions of nationalist sentiment. In 1989 the Georgian Supreme Soviet passed a law making Georgian the official language of the republic; the South Ossetian Supreme Soviet quickly responded by making Ossetian the official language of South Ossetia⁵⁴. In November of that year, in response to South Ossetia's decision to upgrade itself to a sovereign republic Zviad Gamsakhurdia, former dissident and now leader of the largest faction in the Georgian Supreme Soviet, mobilized 30,000 Georgian demonstrators and bused them to the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, where they were obstructed by Soviet security forces and clashes ensued⁵⁵. Both parties deserve a share of the blame for the outbreak of violence, but the role of Gamsakhurdia in stoking ethnic enmity should not be overlooked. Svante Cornell, one of the most respected researchers of the Caucasus conflicts, observes that Gamsakhurdia's stance toward ethnic minorities contained a "certain respect for the indigenous rights of the Abkhaz and to a lesser extent the Ajars, but total disregard for the Ossetians⁵⁶".

There was still a chance to avoid all-out war, but neither side was willing to take it. In September 1990 South Ossetia formally declared independence from Georgia and renamed itself the South Ossetian Democratic Republic; Tbilisi responded in December 1990 by revoking South Ossetia's autonomous status. Violence began again in January 1991, killing approximately 1,000 people and causing an additional 123,000 to flee to

Russia or other parts of Georgia⁵⁷. Soviet and later Russian forces increasingly intervened on the side of the South Ossetians, and by June of 1992 Georgia was forced to accept a cease fire that left South Ossetia inside Georgia in a *de jure* sense, but *de facto* made South Ossetia an independent entity under Russian protection.

As the war in South Ossetia was winding down, a split in the Georgian government widened to the point that it turned violent, pitting two factions of the government against each other. Georgia had held its first presidential elections in May 1991, electing Gamsakhurdia as the country's first president. Georgia at the time - despite its April declaration to the contrary – was still a union republic of the U.S.S.R. and therefore did not have its own armed forces. As the Soviet Union entered the phase of its final collapse in the summer and fall of 1991, a number of armed militia groups began to appear in Georgia, the most powerful of these being the “Horsemen” (Mkhedrioni). Since Georgia did not have its own Army and was beset by ethnic conflicts, Gamsakhurdia tolerated these militias, despite the fact that their loyalties were personal rather than national and despite the fact that they were stronger than the newly-created National Guard, which he controlled⁵⁸.

The militias and his own National Guard would eventually be Gamsakhurdia's undoing. In late September 1991 Tengiz Kitovani, leader of Georgian National Guard, removed himself from the government and by December he was leading the opposition to Gamsakhurdia and attacking the presidential palace in downtown Tbilisi. On 5 January 1992 Gamsakhurdia fled, leaving Tbilisi in the hands of Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani of the Mkhedrioni, who had spent 17 years in Soviet jails for murder⁵⁹. For two months Georgia was essentially leaderless until 8 March, when former Soviet Foreign Minister

Eduard Shevardnadze, an ethnic Georgian, flew from Moscow to Tbilisi and was met by Kitovani and Ioseliani, who were later given the Ministries of Interior and Defense in his new State Council⁶⁰. The putsch found sympathy and possibly even material support in Moscow, where Gamsakhurdia was reviled for his nationalistic governing style and his refusal to enroll Georgia in the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)⁶¹.

As the Georgian government was resolving its own internal wars it also found itself confronted with a new civil war, this time in Abkhazia. Unlike Georgian-Ossetian relations, Georgian-Abkhaz relations had a history marked by periods of enmity, and Soviet policies tended to use this mutual enmity as a brake on Georgian efforts to break free of Moscow's influence, even as the Soviet Union was collapsing. Soviet policies favored ethnic Abkhaz in governing Abkhazia: by 1990 67% of the ministers in the Abkhaz A.S.S.R.s government were Abkhaz despite the fact that the Abkhaz were only 17.8% of the A.S.S.R.s population⁶². As the Georgian national movement gained steam in the waning days of the Soviet Union, Georgians in Tbilisi, who had long believed that Moscow's patronage had given ethnic Abkhaz an unfair advantage vis-à-vis the 46% of Abkhazia's population that was ethnically Georgian, now began to believe that Abkhazia's relationship with Russia presented an existential threat to the Georgian national movement⁶³. When on 9 April 1989 a Georgian demonstration in Tbilisi against Abkhaz independence was violently dispersed by Soviet authorities, leaving 19 people dead, this resulted in an erosion of Soviet legitimacy and a radicalization of the Georgian national movement, which in turn troubled Georgia's ethnic minorities⁶⁴.

So events in the last days of the Soviet Union set the stage for war, but the war itself did not break out until after the Soviet Union and Georgia's first post-Soviet government - that of Gamsakhurdia - had both collapsed. As with the South Ossetia conflict, the one in Abkhazia began as a war of laws and proclamations. On 23 July 1992 the parliament of Abkhazia passed a law repealing the 1978 Soviet era constitution and replacing it with an earlier version from 1925 - before Abkhazia had been subordinated to Georgia - essentially declaring independence from Tbilisi.⁶⁵ The Georgian response was immediate: meeting in emergency session on 25 July the Georgian parliament declared the Abkhaz parliamentary resolution null and void.

After the passage of these competing resolutions, a spate of train robberies and kidnappings occurred between Zugdidi in Georgia and Gali in Abkhazia, apparently by Georgian and Abkhaz bandits working together. When on 13 August the railroad bridge over the Inguri River between Georgia and Abkhazia was destroyed, Georgian President Shevardnadze, who had recently returned from Moscow to fill the leadership gap after Gamsakhurdia fled, called Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba to inform him that Georgian troops would be entering Abkhazia to secure the roads and railways and reassure him that the operation was directed against the bandits, not the Abkhaz government. Shevardnadze also suggested a joint Georgia-Abkhaz operation. On the morning of 14 August, Georgian forces crossed the road bridge over the Inguri and Ardzinba declared a general mobilization to defend the homeland. Abkhaz forces withdrew to Gudauta, site of a Russian air base. On 17 August, after three days of violence and the burning of civilian houses in Abkhazia, Georgian commander Kitovani returned to Tbilisi with the Abkhaz flag from the parliament building as a war trophy;

that same day the Federation of Mountain People of the Caucasus, meeting in Grozny, put out a call for volunteers to fight the Georgian “occupation”.

From there the war entered a period of uneasy truce until March-April 1993, when the Abkhaz and their allies launched major offensives to try to retake Sukhumi but were repelled with heavy casualties on both sides⁶⁶. Shevardnadze traveled to Moscow on 14 May, 1993 and signed a cease fire there on 20 May, 1992. The cease fire provided for Russian peacekeeping troops and UN observers. This cease fire held until 2 July, when Abkhaz and allied troops conducted an amphibious landing near the village of Tamishi with the support of the Russian Navy⁶⁷. After early gains with heavy casualties on both sides, the separatist forces were again pushed back by Georgian government troops from most of their positions, but they still controlled the strategic heights around Sukhumi when another Russian-mediated cease fire was concluded on 27 July 1993. The promised UN observers landed in Sochi, Russia on 15 September, prepared to move into Abkhazia. They never made it. On 16 September the Abkhaz launched an assault along the Kodori River south of Sukhumi, cutting it off from Georgia proper. On 17 September Shevardnadze flew back to Sukhumi to restart the peace negotiations, and was there until the city fell on 27 September, barely escaping being killed or captured.

Shevardnadze was adamant that Russia had provided significant military support to the separatist forces, describing the renewed Abkhaz assault in a communiqué as a “well-coordinated, highly-synchronized joint blow” delivered by the Abkhaz and “the highest echelons of the Russian military”⁶⁸. The evidence of Russian support to Abkhazia is extensive. Thomas Goltz, who wrote one of the best first-hand accounts of the war and specifically the fall of Sukhumi, writes that even after Georgia shot down a

Russian MiG-29 and recovered the body of the pilot with identification papers, Russia denied involvement. Goltz continues, “When the Georgians brought down a second ‘mystery’ aircraft, they invited a United Nations military observer to inspect both it and the papers of the dead pilot. The observer later told me that although he was convinced that the dead man was indeed a professional Russian pilot flying a Russian MiG-29, he was unable to categorically state that the pilot was operating under orders from somewhere inside the Russian defense ministry”⁶⁹.

Despite Russia’s role in precipitating, sustaining and determining the outcome of the conflict in Abkhazia, the weak, corrupt and disorganized Georgian government had no choice to submit to a substantial Russian role in crafting the cease fire that ended the war. Signed in Moscow on 14 April 1994, the cease fire provided for a peacekeeping force under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a force which turned out to be entirely Russian. The UN observer force agreed to in the earlier cease fire was also deployed, but this force was unarmed and entirely dependent upon the Russian peacekeepers for access to Abkhazia. In short, in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia Georgia allowed itself to be drawn into wars it could not hope to win and the result was that although it still had a legal claim to both territories, in fact they governed themselves under Russian protection and with Russian support. And that is the way things stayed until August 2008.

The Road to War: March-August 2008

While the war itself began in the late evening of 7 August 2008, the escalation to armed conflict between Russia and Georgia began months earlier. Since cementing its role as the primary mediator in Georgia’s two “frozen conflicts” in the early 1990s,

Russia had generally been content to let them remain frozen. While it resisted attempts to internationalize the mediation of the conflicts, Russia also generally refrained from attempting to escalate them. There were periodic attacks by Russian aircraft on Georgian territory – such as in March 2007 in the Kodori Gorge, a part of Abkhazia then controlled by Georgia, and in August 2007 near the town of Tsitelubani in the region of the South Ossetian conflict zone – but in general Russia valued the leverage the frozen conflicts gave it over Georgia too much to intentionally destabilize the situation. Two things happened in early 2008 that changed everything in the Russian view. The first was Kosovo’s 17 February 2008 unilateral declaration of independence and the recognition thereof by many Western states. Moscow had long been opposed to the prospect of an independent Kosovo and had threatened to use the “Kosovo Precedent” with respect to Georgia’s frozen conflicts. Robert Kagan describes the Kosovo situation as much more troubling for Russia than even the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, because it sidestepped the UN (thus negating Russia’s influence) and because in Russia’s view it violated international law by intervening into a sovereign state that had committed no external aggression⁷⁰.

The second event in early 2008 that led Russia to change its strategy for dealing with Georgia was the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. The final summit communiqué, which although it failed to extend Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine as they had hoped, stated in clear language that both would become members of the Alliance, was proof to Russia that NATO was serious about further enlargement. Russia had always made its vehement resistance to NATO-accession for Georgia and Ukraine known, but both appeared to be far enough away from meeting the

pre-conditions necessary for membership that Russia was not overly concerned. But when, in 2004 and 2005 respectively, Georgia and Ukraine elected pro-Western governments that began making much more substantial progress at reform and membership for the two began to be discussed in NATO headquarters and NATO capitals, Russia's level of concern began to rise. The 2008 summit communiqué raised that concern to a fever pitch, and this is when Russian actions in the conflict zones, which had already become ominous in the wake of Kosovo's declaration, began to point even more toward a Russian desire to provoke a crisis.

So from March through May 2008 Russia engaged in a series of provocative steps, initially aimed at Abkhazia. Russia announced it was ending its participation of the military and economic embargo there, thereby allowing it to ship military hardware to the Abkhaz government. In April President Putin ordered Russian government agencies to begin dealing directly with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian governments, a step the Georgians described as *de facto* diplomatic recognition. Russia also deployed an additional battalion of Russian troops there under the auspices of increasing its peacekeeping contingent, deployed railroad troops to repair the railway line between the Russian border and a major port – ostensibly for humanitarian purposes but later used to transport Russian military equipment - and shot down an unarmed Georgian reconnaissance drone.

After Georgia failed to respond to these attempts to destabilize Abkhazia, the situation in South Ossetia began to worsen. On 3 July there was an assassination attempt against the head of the Georgian-backed administration there; on 4 July the South Ossetian de facto government – over a dozen of whose members were Russian officials –

ordered a general mobilization; on 8 July Russian aircraft violated Georgian airspace, loitering for some 40 minutes; and on 1 August two bombs exploded in Georgian-controlled territory in South Ossetia, wounding five Georgian policemen. From there, things rapidly escalated into a pattern of exchanges of artillery and mortar fire between Georgian and South Ossetian forces – sometimes with the South Ossetians being shielded by Russian peacekeepers as they fired on Georgian forces. Finally, on 7 August, a Georgian envoy traveled to South Ossetia to meet with Russian special envoy Popov and South Ossetian chief negotiator Chochiev, both of whom failed to show up. Having exhausted attempts to defuse the situation, on the evening of 7 August Georgia declared a unilateral cease fire in South Ossetia and appealed for new negotiations, offering broad South Ossetian autonomy with Russia as the guarantor of that status⁷¹. In the meantime, according to multiple reports, North Caucasian volunteer forces and the advance guard detachments of Russian Army units had infiltrated into South Ossetia.⁷²

So by the evening of 7 August Russia had precipitated a crisis and set the conditions for war. When war came, the nature and scope of the Russian military operation spoke to its objectives, which were: to end Georgian sovereignty over Abkhazia and South Ossetia for good; to damage Georgia's NATO aspirations by demonstrating the danger of an Article 5 commitment to Georgia and to portray Georgia as unstable and unreliable; to exert a chilling effect on other NATO aspirants, especially Ukraine and Azerbaijan and a corresponding chilling effect on the NATO enlargement process itself; to strike a blow at the U.S. for its support of Georgia and for its perceived attempts to “humiliate” Russia in the 1990s; to demonstrate its ability to threaten oil and gas corridors that bypass it; and ultimately to topple the Saakashvili government.

Results of the War – For Russia, For Georgia and For NATO

For Russia the initial sense was that the war had been a significant victory and had achieved almost all of its objectives. From the military perspective, the defeat of Georgia exorcised the ghosts of Chechnya – in the same way that Desert Storm exorcised the ghosts of Vietnam for the U.S. military. Politically the defeat of Georgia, long seen in Russia as a U.S. proxy, went a long way toward assuaging the “humiliations” of the 1990s – seen as imposed on Russia primarily by the United States – and re-asserting Russia’s power and leverage in its self-defined Near Abroad, with a corresponding erosion of Western credibility there. Economically the war demonstrated the ability of Russia to threaten hydrocarbon infrastructure in the Caucasus and thereby called into question the economic wisdom of projects such as the Nabucco Pipeline, which would bring gas to Europe on a southern route bypassing Russia.

But a deeper examination calls into question whether the war really was a victory for Russia in any real sense. First, although it certainly achieved its military objectives, it showed some critical weaknesses in doing so. Russian intelligence and targeting – especially by its air forces – were dismal. There are multiple instances of Russian aircraft bombing old Soviet military infrastructure no longer used by the Georgian military while completely ignoring newly-built, critically important Georgian military infrastructure. There is also scant evidence that Russia was able to use precision-guided munitions and there is plenty of evidence that the munitions they did use had extremely high dud rates. The Russian Air Force also showed a lack ability to effectively suppress Georgia’s rudimentary air defenses. Finally, tactical reconnaissance and situational awareness among Russian units appears to have been lacking, as evidenced by the fact that the

operational commander, General Anatoly Khrulyev, was seriously wounded when his command group convoy rolled into a Georgian ambush.

From the political perspective, the war against Georgia may have soothed wounded Russian pride, but the disproportionate nature of the Russian attack and the quick recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia may yet carry a political price for Russia. Other than Russia, no country save Nicaragua has recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, seriously calling into question the credibility of Russia's assertion that Abkhazia and South Ossetia are the logical extensions of the Kosovo situation; Kosovo, after all, has been recognized by 56 countries⁷³. Having forcibly removed Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, Russia is now saddled with the responsibility of administering and supporting these two statelets. South Ossetia is not viable as an independent state and will certainly seek inclusion in the Russian Federation, but it is an essentially criminal fiefdom that will drain resources from the Russian state. Abkhazia, on the other hand, could be viable and certainly wants independence, not union with Russia; but Russia will almost certainly attempt to annex or otherwise gain control of Abkhazia due to its strategic location on the Black Sea and the huge amount of Russian money that has already been invested there. The status of Abkhazia could be a source of considerable tension between it and Russia in the future. Finally, the war against Georgia failed to cause the downfall of the Saakashvili government as Russia had hoped. The continuing Russian refusal to deal with Saakashvili indicates a mistaken Russian assumption that a Georgian government headed by someone else would be more willing to deal with Russia on Russia's terms. This is a serious miscalculation: even assuming Saakashvili loses popular support to the point

where new elections are called, none of the opposition figures capable of challenging him in a free and fair election are likely to turn Georgia away from its pro-Western course.

But it is the economic costs of the war that are likely to be highest for Russia. In the first week after the war Russian foreign currency reserves dropped by \$12 billion, which at the time was the largest decline since the Russian financial crisis of 1998⁷⁴. Since then reserves have continued to decline - sometimes by as much as \$31 billion per week - as the Russian government attempts to deal with falling oil prices and a steep decline in the value of the ruble. By the end of January, Russia's reserves had declined to \$396 billion, down 34% from the pre-war peak of \$598 billion⁷⁵. Russian equity markets, in which 70% of shares are owned by foreign capital, have declined by 77.5 % since 31 December 2007, the highest rate of decline in the world⁷⁶. The war with Georgia marked the beginning of this precipitous economic decline for Russia, a decline which has since accelerated in the face of falling oil prices and the global financial crisis. Finally, the January 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas pipeline crisis brought home to even the most reticent of European countries the absolute necessity of securing non-Russian gas supplies. This had the effect of revitalizing the Nabucco Pipeline project, which had been all but left for dead in August. All world economies have been hurt since August, but Russia, with its over-reliance on hydrocarbons and the lingering questions about its reliability given its invasion of Georgia and subsequent pipeline crisis with Ukraine, stands to suffer far more than others.

For Georgia the war was a defeat in almost every sense of the word. First, Georgia is unlikely to recover sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the near future, if ever. Second, the war did serious damage to Georgia's military capabilities and

both military and civilian infrastructure. Third, the Russian invasion damaged Georgia's aspirations to become a trade and energy corridor between Asia and Europe – although as mentioned above the fallout from the Russian-Ukrainian gas pipeline crisis may undo much of this damage. There are also lingering doubts about Georgia's conduct in the war, and especially its capacity for adequate civilian and military decision-making processes – these doubts could damage Georgia's NATO accession chances. Finally, although the war resulted in a short-term rallying of support for the Saakashvili government, this has not lasted, with an accelerated tendency for political figures once close to Saakashvili to openly question his leadership.

It is here that Georgia may be able to reap long-term benefit from its defeat in the war with Russia, but doing so will test its democratic credentials. As figures formerly of Saakashvili's inner circle begin to openly challenge him politically, how he responds will be critical to the future of democracy in Georgia. The ongoing fracturing of Saakashvili's National Movement could set the stage for political stability and an accelerated integration of Georgia into Western institutions, assuming an environment emerges within which power is routinely exchanged between two democratic and pro-Western political groupings. But this assumes that Saakashvili recognizes that the political future of Georgia is more important than his own political future. If former National Movement figures such as Nino Burjanadze and Irakli Alasania – both of whom enjoy considerable popularity and both of whom have publicly called for early presidential elections – find themselves arrested or otherwise intimidated by the

government, we can assume that Georgia's democratic transition has failed for the time being. So far there is no sign that Saakashvili intends to take such steps, but as the calls for his resignation grow louder and more persistent, the situation bears watching.

For NATO, the August war marked a low point in its credibility, set the stage for a growing strain on its capabilities and represented a serious challenge to its solidarity. Having stated unequivocally in April that Georgia would become a member of the Alliance, NATO proved powerless to counter an existential threat to Georgia only four months later. Granted, NATO had no formal commitment to defend Georgia, but the fact that the European Union – which has no commitment whatsoever to Georgia and which has never seriously discussed membership for Georgia – took the lead in responding to the crisis seriously damaged NATO's credibility both within and outside of the Alliance. The war also set the stage for a future strain on NATO's capabilities. Having already taken on a mission in Afghanistan that it has failed to properly resource and therefore stands in danger of failing to successfully complete, NATO now faces calls from some of its newer members that it revisit its plans to defend them from what they see as a resurgent and aggressive Russia. Given the paltry level of defense spending in most NATO countries, succeeding in Afghanistan while deterring Russia appears to be a tall order for the Alliance.

Finally, the war exposed and deepened divisions within NATO on the future enlargement of the Alliance and on its relationship with Russia. Some of the older European members of the Alliance, farther removed geographically from Russia and more dependent on it for the energy needs, do not relish a renewed confrontation between NATO and Russia. They are therefore much more likely to be skeptical about the

wisdom of antagonizing Russia by inviting Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. The war has increased this skepticism, bringing these Alliance members into open conflict with those – mostly represented by the United States and the former Soviet or Warsaw Pact Alliance members – who believe in further enlargement and believe it can be accomplished without provoking an unacceptable Russian response.

Meaning of the War – Aberration or Beginning of a Pattern?

The key question that needs to be answered about Russia's war with Georgia is whether it is an aberration or whether it represents the first step in an attempt to re-assert Russian control over territories it believes it “lost” when the Soviet Union collapsed. If the former, the West can write the war off and begin to work on ways to repair its relationship with Russia while at the same time deciding how to deal with the future status of Georgia and Ukraine vis-à-vis NATO; if the latter the West needs to quickly come up with a coherent policy designed to deal with such a revanchist Russia. Here the key country to watch is Ukraine. Ukraine was the other country guaranteed admission to NATO at the April 2008 summit, Ukraine was the second of the “color revolution” countries – after Georgia – to install a pro-Western government unpalatable to Moscow, and Ukraine has its own ready-made area of ethno-territorial tension in the Crimea.

The Crimea, which was transferred to the Ukrainian S.S.R. in 1954 by Soviet Premier Khrushchev in a bid to mend relations strained by Stalin-era atrocities, today has a population that is approximately 67% Russian and 25% Ukrainian⁷⁷. Crimea is also the home of the Russian Black Sea Fleet; Russia and Ukraine signed a basing agreement that will keep the fleet there until 2017, after which time Ukraine has made it clear that it wants the fleet to leave. Finally there is the energy dynamic. Ukraine is a critical transit

country for Russian gas to reach the European market, with 80% of Russia's exports to Europe crossing Ukrainian territory⁷⁸. This means that any gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine will quickly affect European customers downstream, as the January 2009 gas war between the two showed.

So any future Russian attempt to reassert itself as the hegemon in the space of the former Soviet Union will likely begin in Ukraine or at least involve Ukraine at an early stage. While at this point there does not appear to be a concerted effort on Russia's part to precipitate a crisis in Ukraine, there are indicators that point to Russia setting the conditions to do so in the future. Russia spends over \$1 billion per year in Ukraine on an information campaign directed against the Ukrainian government and against NATO⁷⁹. There have also been accusations by the Ukrainian government and some Western governments that Russia is liberally distributing Russian passports to citizens of Crimea⁸⁰ - something it did in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thereafter characterizing its invasion of Georgia partially in terms of "protecting Russian citizens" in those two provinces. Russia also seems to be making the case publically that the Ukrainian government is failing to respect the sovereignty of Crimea: the Russian delegation to the OSCE accused Ukraine of exactly this in September 2008, when it distributed to all OSCE delegations an appeal from the All-Crimea Meeting to the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and Heads of States entitled "On the grave violations by the leadership of Ukraine of basic constitutional powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea"⁸¹. All of these signs, when taken together with the recent Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis and the increasing tendency of the Russian side to direct its attacks against Ukrainian President Yushchenko personally – just as it did with Saakashvili, point to a Russian desire to re-

establish its hegemony over the post-Soviet space, beginning with Ukraine. Whether or not Russia will act on that desire in the near-term is unclear, but it is certainly setting the stage to do so if the opportunity presents itself.

Understanding Russia

To this point we have discussed the strategic context of the situation, reviewed American interests in the region and examined the causes, effects and meaning of the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Before we discuss U.S. policy options in the wake of the war, it will now be useful to examine Russia as a geopolitical actor, since one of the key questions to be answered about U.S. regional policy is its effect on Russia and its relationship with the West. While it may be presumptuous in a paper of this length to seek to answer the questions “What is Russia and what does it want?” – after all, entire academic careers have been consumed in the quest to do so – without at least an attempt to do so our ability to address the other issues in this paper will fatally compromised. First, we should answer the question of what type of geopolitical actor Russia is and how the world appears from Moscow’s vantage point, and then we should ask ourselves what Russia wants. The answers to those two questions will help us determine how we should deal with Russia.

Russia as a Geopolitical Actor

First, Russia is not a “normal” nation-state. Throughout most of its history Russia has been a multinational empire, and the Russian elite was never able to standardize a cultural identity in the territories it ruled⁸² – either in the objective manner, based upon ethnicity or language, or in the subjective manner, based upon a shared commitment to a defined set of principles. The close historical association of Russian state power with

multinational empire, now that the empire has collapsed, leads the Russian elite to worry that a defining the Russian nation in terms of ethnicity would ultimately be destabilizing and would undermine Russia's power⁸³. On the other hand, Russia also lacks a defining ideology or commitment to a shared set of principles that could unite its disparate population – think of the “inalienable rights” of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” of the U.S. Declaration of Independence or the “Einigkeit, Recht und Freiheit” (Unity, Justice and Freedom) of modern Germany. Indeed, the memory of Soviet rule, when Marxist ideology was elevated to the level of religion and countless crimes were committed in its name, has resulted in “a ubiquitous loathing of ideology, in any form” among modern-day Russians⁸⁴. Thus, Russia in its current incarnation can be said to be grappling with the problem of how to define itself absent an empire for the first time in centuries. Still sprawling and multi-ethnic, it cannot choose to define itself in terms of ethnicity for fear of destabilizing itself, and the aversion of its people to ideology means that it has been unable to find a set of ideals or principles to unite them. Unable to define their country absent its empire, the natural inclination of Russian elites is to attempt to reconstitute the empire in some form.

But an attempt to rebuild the empire was not always the natural – or even the most likely – outcome for post-Soviet Russia. For a period after the collapse of the Soviet Union it appeared that Russia would attempt to integrate fully with the West; then Russia went through what can best be described as a pragmatic phase, in which it cooperated with the West where it saw advantage in doing so, but increasingly rejected the adoption of Western values. During the second term of Putin’s presidency – and largely unnoticed in the West until 2007-2008 - Russia began to define itself and its interests in opposition

to those of the West. Indeed, the three major schools of Russian foreign policy generally match these three phases of post-Soviet Russian behavior. The schools are the liberal westernizer, the pragmatic nationalist and the fundamental nationalist⁸⁵. Liberal westernizers favor a market economy, a democratic political system and a pro-western foreign policy. They favor close relations with the E.U. and NATO and believe Russia should adopt western values; they also believe that Russia should abandon its historical great power traditions and any illusions about having a role as a special bridge between Europe and Asia. Pragmatic nationalists favor democracy and a market economy – although they do not necessarily adhere to Western standards of democracy and they do not reject state control of strategic resources and industries. They believe in Russia's great power status and special role in the post-Soviet space as well as a “pragmatic” relationship with NATO and the EU and the diversification of Russia's foreign policy, emphasizing links with newly industrialized countries of Asia and the Middle East. Fundamental nationalists combine ardent nationalism and a desire to re-establish hegemony over the post-Soviet space with antipathy toward a market economy; they are hostile toward the E.U. and NATO. Current Russian foreign policy combines elements of pragmatic nationalism and fundamental nationalism: it retains a market economy but with state control of strategic industries; it retains the trappings of democracy without its substance; and it is increasingly hostile to the West as it attempts to reassert its control over its former imperial space.

So if the attempt to rebuild the empire was not a natural outcome of the post-Soviet drift Russia experienced and if Russia began its post-Soviet history with an attempt to integrate with the West, then what caused its slide toward nationalism,

antipathy toward the West - in particular the United States – and its attempt to re-establish hegemony in its former imperial space? When asked this question, Russians will inevitably include as part if not all of their answer the “humiliation of the 1990s”. This complaint surprises many Westerners, who believe that the West genuinely tried to help Russia in the initial phase of its post-Soviet transition. They will cite the fact that Western governments and institutions provided billions of dollars in financial aid to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, from 1992-1997 the U.S, provided \$4.9 billion bilateral aid, the World Bank provided \$9.8 billion and the International Monetary Fund provided \$14.4 billion, followed by another \$11.2 billion during the Russian financial crisis of 1998⁸⁶. Given the fact that the entire 1992 Russian state budget was under \$25 billion and the 1995 budget was approximately \$52 billion⁸⁷, the Western financial contribution to Russia’s financial stability and recovery was significant. But Russians, already shamed that their country was seeking handouts from the West, were angered when the Western prescription for economic recovery led – in their eyes – to increased economic hardship and social instability. No matter that the corruption of Russia’s political and economic elite was responsible for much of the hardship experienced by common people – in the eyes of many Russians their economic hardships and attendant social breakdown were a function of the Western economic prescriptions themselves. As Craig Nation says, “Rather than serving as a prelude to a fundamental reorientation, however, the first phase of post-communist transition led directly to a severe economic depression, a breakdown of civic order and public morale, and a widespread perception of international defeat and humiliation”⁸⁸.

If Russians are ashamed of the fact that they had to rely on Western aid to manage their internal economic problems and resentful that Western economic prescriptions seemed to do little to help their economy recover, externally they believe the West took advantage of Russia's weakness to advance its interests at their expense. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia's political leadership seemed eager – sometimes too eager - to integrate with the West. Lilia Shevtsova of the Carnegie Moscow Center says, "In the 1990s some Western politicians were unable to conceal their embarrassment at Moscow's readiness to satisfy Washington's demands. Richard Nixon even advised the Kremlin to abandon attempts to tie Russia to America and think more about its national interests"⁸⁹. Russia hoped to be an equal partner to the West, and hoped that partnership would bring it a voice and a vote in Western institutions. The problem was that the West saw the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to extend the Euro-Atlantic security architecture eastward in the name of advancing stability, and although Western countries were willing to give Russia a seat at the table, it soon became apparent that Russia was neither ready nor able to join Western structures as a full member. So, in an attempt to preserve a semblance of cooperation and inclusion, the West offered Russia a deal which Arnold Horelick and Thomas Graham dubbed "trading symbolism for substance". The elements of the deal were that the west encouraged Russia by including it in the G8 and creating the Russia-NATO Council in return for more substantive concessions from Moscow such as withdrawing troops from the Baltics, accepting NATO enlargement and allowing a western solution to the Kosovo crisis⁹⁰.

For its part, the United States developed a bilateral version of the "symbolism for substance" deal and called it the "mature strategic partnership". Brzezinski's assessment

of the U.S.-Russian partnership largely echoes Horelick's and Graham's characterization of "trading symbolism for substance. Brzezinski says, "While the concept of 'mature strategic partnership' was flattering, it was also deceptive. America was neither inclined to share global power with Russia nor could it, even if it had wanted to do so. The new Russia was simply too weak, too devastated by three-quarters of a century of Communist rule, and too socially backward to be a real global partner⁹¹". Although Russia initially accepted the terms of these partnership arrangements, when put into practice they began increasingly to grate on Russian sensibilities. NATO enlargement and Kosovo proved especially difficult for Russia to swallow, since both highlighted Russia's irrelevance to Euro-Atlantic security issues and exposed the partnership between Russia and the West as largely lacking in substance.

Increasingly the Russian political elite began to see NATO enlargement as directed against Russia, although none of them could specify exactly what threat to Russia such enlargement posed. But many in the Russian elite still saw NATO in Cold War terms and therefore saw Russian membership in it as antithetical to Russian interests and its enlargement without Russia as a threat. In the meantime, NATO and other Western Cold War-era organizations were changing to reflect the times. From the late 1980s onward, NATO, the OSCE, the EU, the Western European Union and the Council of Europe expanded their definitions of security from purely military to increasingly non-military terms. As early as 1991, the NATO Strategic Concept stated that NATO would take a "broad approach to stability and security encompassing political, economic, social and environmental aspects along with the indispensable defence dimension"⁹². In other words, NATO was transforming itself from a purely military alliance into an organization

dedicated to preserving and where possible advancing security and stability by acting together on a broad range of issues. Russia either failed to appreciate this change in focus or chose to see NATO's newfound concern with factors outside the purely military dimension as a new type of threat rather than a transformation of the Alliance into an organization of broader than purely military character. In any case, NATO's continued enlargement and the NATO campaign in Kosovo, undertaken over Russian objections, when combined with the ongoing economic and social breakdown in Russia - which many Russians associate with their experiment with Western economic prescriptions - represented key elements of the international humiliation and isolation Russia believes it experienced in the 1990s. And this decade of humiliation and isolation is often referenced by Russians in explaining Russia's return of state control over large sectors of the economy and assertive, even aggressive, foreign policy of today.

What Russia Wants

So, given this characterization of Russia as a geopolitical actor, what are likely to be the objectives of Russian foreign and security policy? These can be broadly described as follows: an end to the “unipolar” system through a transformation of the international system and a dilution of U.S. power; privileged membership in international organizations and Western institutions without the burden of compliance with all of their standards and norms; an end to Western influence over and scrutiny of Russia’s domestic environment; and Western acknowledgment that Russia deserves a “zone of privileged interests along its periphery. I will address each of these in turn.

Russia is not a status quo power: it is not content with the international system as it is currently ordered and it seeks to transform that system to dilute Western - and

especially American – power. This objective should not be confused with the criticism of the U.S. sometimes expressed by allies such as Germany or France – Russia’s objectives are fundamentally different. While Germany and France seek incremental changes to the international order that emphasize consensus and would put the same constraints on all actors, Russia seeks to tear down the system as currently ordered and rebuild it with greater constraints on American action and fewer on Russian action. If the vision of countries like Germany and France can be described as grounded in law, that of Russia can be described as grounded in power and the re-division thereof to Russia’s advantage.

This re-division of power would position Russia as one of the poles in a new, multi-polar system, on a par with the U.S. and the EU. Russian political scientist Alexander Dugin – the father of the modern-day version of the Russian political doctrine known as Neo-Eurasianism reflects this thinking by arguing that only a world made up of several “regional empires offers a viable alternative with a strong theoretical potential that could face up to the current globalization processes instituted by the United States. Russia is the incarnation of the search for a historical alternative to Atlanticism. Therein lies her global mission”⁹³. But Dugin is not merely an academic and his theory is not consigned to the halls of academia. Dugin has become close to the Russian political elite and his theories increasingly provide the theoretical justification for Russian policy. As Marlene Laruelle says in her book Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire, “Dugin has enjoyed the greatest public success of all the Neo-Eurasianists, and he most directly influences certain political circles looking for a new geopolitics for post-Soviet Russia”⁹⁴; she goes on to conclude that “Dugin thus seems to have succeeded... in his entry into official structures”⁹⁵.

The problem with Dugin’s ascent to a quasi-official status in the formulation and execution of Russian policy is that his doctrine cannot function without creating enemies⁹⁶. In defining Russia’s global quest as the search for an alternative to Atlanticism, Dugin has made the West the “other” for Russia – the entity to which its opposition gives Russia its identity. Although the current Russian government certainly does not consult texts of Eurasianism before it makes policy decisions, the closeness and legitimacy the movement enjoys among Russia’s political leadership colors the way the leadership reacts to geopolitical events, conditioning it to see enemies and threats emanating from the West even when the West itself does not realize it is acting in a way that would be considered enemy and threatening. Dugin’s Neo-Eurasianism and its imperative to create a Russian-led pole to counter the West resembles nothing so much as the manifestation in foreign policy of the fundamental nationalism school of Russian political thought described above.

Even as it seeks to transform the current international order, which it sees as Western-dominated, Russia seeks to ensure the continuation of its privileged membership in the organizations that define that order. Russia greatly values its seat on the United Nations Security Council and its membership in the G8. It is less enthused with its roles within NATO and the EU – both of which amount to privileged observer status – but is not about to give them up. It is eager to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), but its application remains in limbo due to the requirement for all current members to approve new members. Georgia, already a member, refuses to accede to Russia’s membership, citing Russia’s 2006-2008 embargoes on Georgian produce, mineral water and wine in violation of WTO rules.

The incongruity of attempting to expand its membership in the clubs of power and influence that largely define the global order while attempting to tear down large parts of the order itself is obvious, and this leads to a certain schizophrenia in Russian policy. As Andrei Kortunov says, “On the one hand, the Putin leadership has stated that we are a part of the civilized world and that Russia must become integrated into the community of leading Western nations. On the other hand, we see very clearly the development of a siege mentality. In this view, Russia is besieged by enemies”⁹⁷. The enemies, of course, are the same countries that Russia seeks to join in the clubs of international influence. When Russia was politically and economically weak, it sought equal partnership with the West although – as discussed above – it was incapable of functioning as a reliable partner even had the West been inclined to give it real power. However, now that it has regained a measure of economic and political power, even full membership in all the organizations it seeks to join is unlikely to satisfy Russia’s need for acknowledgement of its international status. Dmitri Trenin argues that Russia would be willing to join the West only “if it was given something like co-chairmanship of the Western club” and could take its “rightful place in the world along side the U.S. and China”⁹⁸.

Even as it seeks to join international organizations to which it does not yet belong and secure positions of privilege in those to which it already belongs, Russia chafes under the codes of conduct of many of those organizations and ignores their rules when it sees fit. Certainly all countries do this to some extent, and powerful countries probably do it more than others, but the extent of Russian intransigence is exceptional. The embargo against Georgia (and Moldova) is a good example. Trade embargoes contravene WTO rules, although WTO member countries sometimes use them – witness the U.S. embargo

of Cuba. But the U.S. embargo against Cuba was undertaken in retaliation for a massive expropriation of U.S. private and corporate property by the Castro government in Cuba. The Russian embargo of Georgian and Moldovan products was clearly politically motivated – the intent was to punish these two countries for their drift toward the West. Russian claims that Georgian and Moldovan products were contaminated have been repeatedly disproven by independent testing; and Moldova, which saw the light and thereafter toed a more pro-Russian line, quickly saw the embargo on its products lifted. Finally, the brazenness of imposing a Russian embargo on WTO member countries while Russia's membership application was being considered should be noted. In the G8, generally described as a club of democratic polities and market economies, Russia also stands out for its non-adherence to – if not outright rejection of – of the principles of both.

In its internal affairs, Russia charts the course sometimes known as Sovereign Democracy, meaning that its government's internal behavior is not a subject for discussion. Russian leaders do engage the Russian people to determine their preferences and often govern accordingly, but they feel no obligation to subject themselves to Western-style elections or to cede actual political power or extensive political rights to the people. The concept of Sovereign Democracy is in harmony with the doctrine of Eurasianism – in fact, it can function as its internal component. Dugin, the father of Neo-Eurasianism, says that “geopolitics is opposed to the democratic principle because the ability to know the meaning of things is unavoidably restricted to the leaders”⁹⁹.

Not surprisingly therefore, Russia defines international scrutiny of its internal affairs as a serious threat to its security, seeing even independent international and non-

governmental organizations as agents of foreign (usually Western) influence. Indeed, First Deputy Premier Sergei Ivanov defines the single greatest threat to Russia's national security as "meddling in Russia's internal affairs by foreign states", principally the United States¹⁰⁰. Here the association of its own security with that of the state by Russia's ruling class becomes apparent. The vast majority of organizations at work in the former Soviet Union are not affiliated with any foreign government¹⁰¹, and even those affiliated with the U.S. government are generally working toward such innocuous goals as the development of civil society and the advancement of human rights. These goals are hardly a threat to the Russian state – indeed, their achievement would make Russia inarguably better off. However, they are a threat to Russia's political elite, since a vibrant civil society and an environment conducive to the development of political and economic freedoms would cede an unacceptable amount of power to the people, who could then turn the government out of office.

This worldview – in which foreign organizations operating in Russia are fronts for foreign attempts to bring down the Russian state – can be "powerfully self-fulfilling", according to Steven Solnik, and produces "a Russia with little patience to listen to Western criticism and little reluctance to dismiss domestic critics as unpatriotic and seditious"¹⁰². This explains in part why the "Color Revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine were so chilling for the Russian regime. As Lilia Shevtsova says, "Moscow genuinely believes that Ukrainian society took to Maidan Square because it had been inspired and paid to do so by the West"¹⁰³. Although the Georgian and Ukrainian states are still very much alive, the regimes that controlled them prior to the revolutions are no longer in power – this is the outcome that terrifies the Russian political elite.

If Sovereign Democracy and a rejection of foreign influence are Russia's objectives for its internal policy, its external objective – along its periphery at least – can be defined as the acknowledgement by other powers of a Russian zone of privileged interests there. This objective is also congruous with those of Dugin's Eurasianism: among Neo-Eurasianism's convictions are a common cultural identity for Russians and the non-Russian nations of the former Soviet Union; the idea that Russia's position at the heart of the continent requires an imperial form of political organization; and rejection of the West, capitalism and the Atlanticist idea¹⁰⁴. And as it does within its borders, Russia feels itself under siege by “the maritime and democratic enemy” along its periphery; in calling for the restoration of the Soviet Union and the reorganization of the Russian Federation, Dugin states that “the battle for the integration of the post-Soviet space is a battle for Kiev”¹⁰⁵.

Although the idea that Russia should enjoy a zone of privileged interests along its periphery found its most recent expression in the Medvedev Doctrine, the idea itself has been around ever since Russia “lost” the territories of the former Soviet Union. As early as 4 December 1991 Anatoly Sobchak, then the mayor of Saint Petersburg, declared that the Russian Federation would reclaim “numerous Russian provinces that were given to Ukraine” if Kyiv would “refuse to join a political union with Moscow”¹⁰⁶. And Sobchak was not alone – then-Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, often accused by Russian nationalists if being a stooge of the West, said in the mid-1990s that the Russian Federation would be active in “protecting the rights of Russians in other states of the Commonwealth of Independent States. This is top priority. We will be protecting their rights firmly and using powerful methods if needed”¹⁰⁷. So the desire to extend its power

outside its borders was there from the start – what was missing in the 1990s was the power to do so. Until August 2008, though the capability to project power outside its border had been recovered to a reasonable degree, a pretext to do so was lacking. That all changed in South Ossetia, where Russia put its concept of a zone of privileged interests into action and meant to show the world that it is once again a force to be reckoned with and to show its neighbors the dangers of pursuing a policy of integration with the West.

So this is the Russia we are dealing with – uncomfortable in its role as a “normal” nation-state, still stinging from its “humiliation” at the hands of the West in the 1990s, committed to the transformation of the international system and the dilution of U.S. power while retaining its seats of power and influence in international organizations, increasingly authoritarian at home and hyper-sovereign and increasingly aggressive in its self-defined “Near Abroad”.

The Way Ahead: Three Options for U.S. Policy

While U.S. policy toward Georgia might not normally be the most important issue in the relationship between the U.S. and other NATO members, in the cohesion of the Alliance itself and in the bilateral U.S.-Russia relationship, the events of April through August of 2008 have arguably¹⁰⁸ made it so now. In April NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine would become members of NATO. In August Russia invaded and occupied Georgia, and continues even today to be in violation of the cease fire accords it signed to end the war. Given this situation, how can the West best pursue its objectives in Eurasia?

Option 1: Let's Make a Deal

There is a school of thought – most often associated with the classical realist school in international affairs – that advocates ceding to Russia’s its desired zone of privileged interests along its periphery in return for which Russia would presumably become easier to deal with on other issues. This school argues that a sober assessment of U.S. national interests, unclouded by emotional attachments to individual countries and unencumbered by attempts to “promote democracy” abroad, will lead us to the conclusion that our relationship with Russia is too important to allow it to be impacted by close relationships with other, less important countries, especially when Russia considers those countries to be in its zone of privileged interests. This school further argues that repairing our relationship with Russia will secure its cooperation on issues of vital importance to U.S. security, from terrorism, to North Korea, to Iran to arms control and counter-proliferation. As the only country in the former Soviet Union in a position to impact these issues, Russia is the natural partner for the United States in this region of the world, the argument goes.

This policy option has advantages. First, it would certainly result in a short-term improvement in our relationship with Russia. Second, it would remove a divisive issue – what to do about the promise of membership extended to Ukraine and Georgia – from NATO’s agenda. The sighs of relief from Berlin, Paris and several other European capitals would be audible. Third, it might result – at least in the short term – in a lower chance of renewed conflict in the Caucasus. After all, Russia knows the history of the region and its imperial and Soviet experiences have taught it what steps are necessary to maintain stability there. The world would of course have to swallow hard and turn a

blind eye to Russian methods, but the payoff would be a lower chance of outright war in the future.

The tidiness and simplicity of this option are alluring. But they are also its greatest failing. Policy-making within and among modern nation-states is inherently an intellectually intensive and often confusing process. The variables and interests at play are almost never all immediately apparent, and single factor solutions to policy issues almost never achieve their objectives, at least not without a multitude of unforeseen and unintended consequences. “Solving” the Eurasian security problem by ceding the Russia an exclusive sphere of influence there is no exception.

First, where is the evidence that Russia has the influence to help us with some of the issues we consider to be vital to our national interest if we would simply stop antagonizing it by cultivating close relationships with its neighbors? For example, where is the evidence that – even if it so desired – Russia could force Iran to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons? Writing in the November-December 2008 issue of *Foreign Relations*, Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich argues that Russia is no more likely to support a drastic increase in pressure on Iran now than in it did against Iraq in the lead-up to the 2003 war there, and that even if it did, “the suggestion that Russian leaders could get Iran to end its quest for nuclear weapons raises doubts about whether this sort of policy thinking should be labeled ‘realism’ at all”¹⁰⁹. Recent experience illustrates the dubious nature of the claims that Russia holds sway over Iran’s nuclear ambitions. In 2007 Russia made an attempt to convince Iran to negotiate in good faith and to clarify all

of its obligations to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran resisted, refusing to stop its most sensitive nuclear activity and thus dooming the Russian attempt to failure and undermining claims of Russian influence over Iranian policy¹¹⁰.

Second, as a rule, this approach simply isn't practiced in international diplomacy. The tit-for-tat approach to foreign affairs advocated by the realist school appears more suited to the halls of academia than those of the Department of State and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in other countries. The policy-making process of most countries is subject to far too many competing interests and processes to allow this type of theory to emerge in practice. As Sestanovich writes, "this 'let's make a deal' approach to diplomacy has a tempting simplicity to it. Diplomats are widely thought to be negotiating such deals all the time, but it is in fact very rare that any large problem is solved because representatives of two great powers trade completely unrelated assets. The 'grand bargains' favored by amateur diplomats are almost never consummated"¹¹¹.

Third, most of the areas where – under this theory – we could expect better Russian cooperation are areas where Russia is already doing as much as it is going to do regardless of what the West does or does not do in the former Soviet Union. Iran, discussed above, provides one example, and counter-terrorism provides another. Although this would appear to be an area where Western and Russian interests coincide, Russia sees counter-terrorism almost exclusively in terms of its attempt to subdue the nationalist-Islamist movements of the North Caucasus. As Robert Kagan says, the idea of genuine strategic cooperation with Russia on terrorism is a fiction; "for Russia, the war on terror is about Chechnya"¹¹². Feeling itself unthreatened by regional or global Islamic extremist movements, Russia ignores or even actively supports them. Hezbollah and

Hamas are two examples. Not only has Russia failed to label them terrorist organizations, but it supplies arms to Iran and Syria, the two principal state sponsors of Hezbollah and Hamas respectively. In January 2009, Israel produced evidence that Russian arms sold to Syria had been passed on to Hamas¹¹³.

Even when Russia appears to cooperate with the West in matters of counter-terrorism, this cooperation is often deceptive. Initial Russian support of the U.S. “war on terror” in 2001-2002 was at best a tactical alignment based upon the perception of a shared threat and a shared view that the threat could be countered militarily¹¹⁴. Russia sought international legitimacy for its war in Chechnya and therefore sought to tie it to the war on terror; as the war in Chechnya wound down, Russian cooperation in and support for the war on terror declined. Today, Russia pressures former Soviet states like Kyrgyzstan to close U.S. facilities on their soil even as it offers its own territory and air space for transit by U.S. and NATO forces. While appearing cooperative, at least part of the motive for these actions is to monopolize Western access routes to Afghanistan, a development that would have obviously negative effects on our chances of success there.

The fourth reason why the realist prescription is unworkable is that it would fatally undermine NATO’s credibility - since it would require NATO to ignore its pledge to invite Ukraine and Georgia to join the Alliance – and would therefore sow uncertainty and instability over large regions of Eurasia. As Janusz Bugajski writes, most of the new NATO allies believe that without a realistic prospect for NATO membership Ukraine and Georgia – among others – will increasingly become unstable and subject to Russia’s neo-imperial ambitions¹¹⁵. Such a situation would almost inevitably lead to a re-nationalization of European security as the newer NATO allies of the former Warsaw

Pact and Soviet Union – especially Poland and the Baltic Republics – realized that NATO’s security guarantee was unreliable and began to re-arm with the goal of defending against any resurgent threat from Russia alone. Individual security is by definition more expensive and destabilizing than collective security, so the negative effects of this type of result for stability in Europe are obvious. A new militarization of parts of Europe, a zone of instability in Central and Eastern Europe and increasingly aggressive Russian behavior are only some of the possible outcomes.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, ceding to Russia a zone of privileged interests would reinforce Russia’s recent unconstructive behavior and invite its continuation. History generally has not shown a pattern of constructive behavior on issues of importance to the West after the West acceded to Russian demands on other issues. In fact, it has more often shown the opposite result – Western attempts to mollify Russia are often seen as weakness and result in further demands and increased unconstructive behavior instead of an increased willingness to cooperate. In fact, given its stated aim of ending the “unipolar” system and diluting U.S. power in international affairs, Russia is more likely to oppose a given outcome simply because it is in the U.S. interest, as long as opposing that outcome does not damage Russia’s power and security more than those of the U.S.

As mentioned earlier, the ultimate objectives for our policy in Eurasia should include setting the conditions for Russia’s own transition to a future as a productive and reliable member of the club of democratic polities and market economies. I am not suggesting that Russia will become a copy of the United States – that is neither achievable nor desirable. But a Russia with behavior similar to that of France on the

international stage could be considered a successful outcome. Russia – like France – will long have a post-imperial hangover, looking back ruefully on its glory days and attempting to preserve vestiges of its former status. Also like France, Russia will always have a cultural connection to its former imperial subjects and will exhibit traces of paternalism in its relationships with them. Finally, Russia might always join France in opposing American objectives simply for the sake of opposing American objectives and reminding America that it has a presence on the world stage. All of these are acceptable outcomes. What is not acceptable is a continued Russian insistence that it and it alone has interests along its periphery, a continued need to exercise control – not simply influence – over the trajectories of the states there, and a continued willingness to use coercion and even military force to do so. Unfortunately, the realist prescription discussed above would make all of these outcomes more likely.

Option 2: Stay the Course

A second option would be for NATO to continue to hold the door of membership open to Ukraine and Georgia and to continue efforts – although probably at a more deliberate pace – to prepare both for Alliance membership. The greatest short-term advantage to this approach is that it preserves NATO's credibility by honoring the statement made at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008. A second advantage to this approach is that, assuming the pace of integration was deliberate enough, it would preserve Alliance cohesiveness – under such strain after August 2008 – on the objective of eventual Georgian and Ukrainian NATO membership. But we should not underestimate the divisions with NATO on this issue or downplay the amount of work that needs to be done to come to an agreement on a common way ahead. Both diplomats

from Ukraine and Georgia and NATO staff officers have noticed an increasing tendency on the part of their counterparts from some countries – Germany and France in particular – to be more resistant to cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia than they were before the war¹¹⁶. But an approach that preserves the commitment made in April 2008 while proceeding at a more deliberate pace is likely the only way to repair the divisions in NATO on this issue, assuming they can be repaired.

A third advantage of this approach is that it gives Russia time to adjust to the idea of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. True, flush with their military victory over Georgia, Russian officials have proclaimed to their Ukrainian counterparts that NATO expansion is “finished” and that Russia “will not allow Ukraine to join the Alliance”¹¹⁷. It is also true that Georgia and Ukraine – in the Russian mind – are special cases with both emotional and historical significance. But we can recall that Russia has made statements vowing to resist before, even going so far as threatening a “Cold Peace” before the first round of enlargement¹¹⁸. Given time and with progress on other important issues in the relationship between Russia and the West – for example arms control and missile defense – it is conceivable that Russia may decide to accept an enlarged NATO that includes Ukraine and Georgia, even given the difficult recent history surrounding the issue.

This option also has its disadvantages, of course. First, pushing the prospect of membership into the indefinite future might test the patience and the commitment to reform of both Georgia and Ukraine. The reforms required to join NATO, although ultimately beneficial for the candidate country, are painful and expensive in the short term. Absent a renewed commitment and a reasonable timeline from NATO, the

candidate countries may fear that they will complete their reforms and still have no solid prospects for near-term membership. While the reforms themselves will pay benefits in terms of transparency and efficiency once completed, that will be of small comfort if both Georgia and Ukraine find themselves subject to increasing Russian pressure and with no backing from NATO.

Second, taking such a deliberate approach provides an opportunity for politically-motivated resistance from the more skeptical Alliance members. This would of course be disguised as objective criticism of the readiness of the candidate countries for membership, but the real roots of such resistance would lie in the country making the criticism and in its relationship with Russia. American NATO staff officers have already noticed that what was an attitude of caution about Ukraine and especially Georgia before the war has now turned into hardened skepticism. In one instance, the German and French delegations resisted the expansion of a NATO staff training program for Ministry of Defense civilians to Georgia, despite the benign, academic nature of this program¹¹⁹.

Other Allies who were mildly supportive are now taking a neutral stance – the Netherlands, for instance, has suspended its existing staff training program with Georgia¹²⁰. And according to Ukrainian diplomats, their German and Dutch counterparts have flatly told them that they need Russian consent to join NATO¹²¹. Given these inauspicious early signs, it is possible to imagine a future where some NATO Allies – having suspended all assistance to Georgia and Ukraine – then complain that the latter are not making adequate progress in reform and use this as a reason to further delay the prospect of membership. But, as mentioned above, it is also possible that the more deliberate pace of accession for Georgia and Ukraine will allow the more skeptical

Alliance members time to support the idea more wholeheartedly, although the early signs for this are not conclusive.

The third disadvantage to this policy option is that it leaves the door open for continued Russian meddling in Georgia and Ukraine and continued attempts to destabilize them. The Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis of January was clearly in part motivated by a Russian desire to portray Ukraine as unstable, unreliable and therefore unsuitable as a future member of the Euro-Atlantic community. Early indications are that this attempt has been at least partially successful, with renewed support from some European countries for Russian-backed pipelines that bypass Ukraine and growing impatience from the German government over both the gas crisis and the in-fighting within the Ukrainian government¹²². While Ukraine certainly bears a share of the responsibility for the gas crisis and the lion's share of the blame for the instability in its government, both are also products of long-standing Russian attempts to destabilize the government of Ukrainian President Yushchenko, who is seen by Moscow as unacceptably close to the West.

In Georgia the stakes are even higher and Russian actions are even more ominous. Russian troops occupying South Ossetia and Abkhazia still make occasional forays into Georgian villages adjacent to them, such as Akhalgori and Kvemo-Nikozi, and in the past five months sniper fire coming from the Russian-occupied territories has killed eleven Georgian policemen and wounded 22¹²³. The almost 8000 Russian troops with armored vehicles and heavy weapons that are garrisoned in South Ossetia and Abkhazia are some 4500 more than allowed by the cease fire agreement that ended the August war, and Russia is building permanent bases in both regions, also in violation of the cease fire.

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia has been refused access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and is therefore unable to ascertain the locations or activities of Russian or separatist military forces. For its part Georgia, which has withdrawn its forces from areas adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, is hoping that its attempts to publicize Russian activities will keep the international community engaged. Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria says, "We're working hard to stay on the radar of the international community and make sure the price for these actions is as high as possible. That's the only way to deter Russia"¹²⁴.

So, if the West pursues this "stay the course" option, the key question for Ukraine and especially for Georgia becomes how to survive as sovereign and independent states until NATO membership becomes a reality. With its military still battered from the war, with Russian troops in better positions and in greater numbers inside Georgia than they were before the start of the war in August, and with growing unease on the part of many NATO countries about continued assistance to Georgia, the outlook is not good. A stepped-up U.S. military assistance effort – one designed to give Georgia the capabilities required to deter or better-resist another Russian invasion – is one possible option to consider. But, such an effort would be a major and expensive undertaking that would draw howls of protest and threats from Russia and would draw little support from many of our European allies. Nevertheless, if we pursue the "stay the course" option, such an effort might be the only way to provide for Georgian security until NATO admits it and Ukraine. A secondary benefit of such an effort would be that – once admitted – Georgia would be much less of a security liability to the Alliance than it would be in its current state.

Option 3: A Third Way

Other than ceding Russia its zone of privileged interests, or continuing down the path of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine while attempting to heal divisions on the issue within the Alliance, is there another way forward that allows the reform processes underway in Georgia and Ukraine to continue while providing for their security? As discussed above, the key problems with continuing down the path of NATO integration for Georgia and Ukraine are threefold: the possibility that one or both will lose patience as membership continues to be delayed, the opportunity it provides for politically-motivated resistance to membership for the more skeptical Alliance members, and the space and time it provides for further Russian attempts to destabilize the two candidate countries. Any feasible “third way” option would have to address these problems.

One possible way forward would be for the U.S. to unofficially and without an announcement abandon its efforts to integrate Georgia and Ukraine into NATO while concentrating on concluding bilateral arrangements with these countries that guarantee their security in exchange for continued across the board reforms and a pledge by Georgia not to use force in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recently-concluded strategic partnership and cooperation agreements between the U.S. and these two countries could serve as the foundation for such an arrangement. Georgia and Ukraine might then conclude similar arrangements with other countries of like mind with the U.S. Obvious candidates are Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, but countries such as the U.K., Romania and even Finland, Sweden and Norway are also possibilities. What might eventually emerge from this series of arrangements is a security community of northern and eastern European countries, underwritten and backed by American power, that would

give space and time for continued political and economic reform in Georgia, Ukraine and possibly countries such as Azerbaijan, with the ultimate objective of integrating them fully into the Euro-Atlantic community.

The advantages of such an arrangement are that it guarantees the security of Georgia and Ukraine while requiring them to continue their current reforms, and it holds out the prospect that over the long-term both could be integrated into the major institutions of the Euro-Atlantic community. It also decouples those countries that are more committed to the spread of Euro-Atlantic values and the accompanying security architecture to the East from those that are more reticent, thereby removing the ability of the latter group to derail the process. This also seriously undermines Russia's ability to derail the Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia and Ukraine by exploiting the vacillation among some NATO members. As Lilia Shevtsova says, Russia sees such irresolute behavior as a sign of weakness, which makes it tempting for Moscow to ignore Europe or try to coerce it¹²⁵. The third way option would make it clear to Russia that on this issue it was dealing with the United States, which Shevtsova says is seen by the Russian elite as "the only nation in the world whose spirit and outlook remotely resemble those of Russians and as the only nation that deserves its attention"¹²⁶.

These are significant advantages, but the disadvantages of such an approach are significant as well. First, a security arrangement that "cherry-picked" a handful of current NATO members and knit them into an alternative security arrangement would likely fatally fracture the Alliance and end its role as the pre-eminent vehicle for Euro-Atlantic security, opening the way for a variety of competing security arrangements on the continent. Second, this approach essentially abandons common cause with Europe as

an entity on the questions of expansion of Euro-Atlantic values and dealing with Russia. This outcome would achieve the long-standing Russian goal of splitting the U.S. from Europe without Russia itself having to lift a finger. While it is tempting for Americans to see the differences in opinion between the U.S. and – for instance – Germany over the pace and scope of NATO enlargement and over dealing with Russia as indicative of an insoluble difference in worldview, doing so would be a mistake. First, the differences in worldview between America and its European partners pale in comparison with the differences between members of the Euro-Atlantic community as a whole and the rest of the world. There really is such a thing as a Euro-Atlantic community, and while from the inside it may appear fractious and diverse, from the outside looking in, it is surprisingly homogenous.

The second reason it would be a mistake to abandon common cause on this issue with some of our European partners is that NATO has survived even more divisive issues in the past. The Pershing-II missile deployment to Europe in the early 1980s is a good example. When the United States began to deploy to Germany Pershing-II nuclear missiles capable of hitting the Soviet Union in response to the Soviet deployment of SS-20 nuclear missiles to Eastern Europe, the outcry in Europe – and West Germany in particular – was deafening. A *New York Times* article of December 28 1983 noted that only 46% of Germans favored staying inside NATO if the missiles were deployed, which led the *Times* to conclude that “the deployment of the United States missiles, which is now under way, could threaten the continued existence of NATO”¹²⁷. In the end, the U.S. missiles were deployed, West Germany remained within NATO, and the Soviet Union agreed to negotiations on the removal of both the SS-20s and Pershing-IIs from

Europe. The resulting Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty made all of Europe more secure than it had been prior to the Pershing II deployment. In comparison to the Pershing II crisis, the difference of opinions over Georgian and Ukrainian NATO membership appears less threatening. Indeed, even after the war in Georgia 67% of Europeans believed that Europe should address security issues in partnership with the U.S., a larger proportion of Europeans (67%) than Americans (58%) supported increased security assistance to Georgia, and Europeans as a whole were more concerned about Russia's trajectory than were Americans¹²⁸. These numbers would seem to bode well for a solution to the current impasse, as long as all parties remain engaged on the issue.

The third disadvantage to a “third way” approach is that it would tempt Russia to test the limits of the U.S. security guarantee. While Russia would be careful not to blatantly violate the sovereignty of one of its neighbors – Russia after all has no desire to intentionally provoke a war with the U.S. – it would certainly engage in provocations similar to those it engaged in prior to the August war with Georgia. The intent would be either to provoke a response from the neighboring country – again, as happened in Georgia – which Russia could use to justify its own military incursion, painting the neighbor as the aggressor; or to engage in a series of aggressive but limited actions – cyber attacks, cross-border aircraft raids which it then denied, sniper attacks on neighboring security forces – that would destabilize the neighboring country and undermine faith in the security guarantee.

Finally, this “third way” approach would lay the burden of security for all the members of such a security grouping squarely at the feet of the United States, since it would be the only member of the new alliance with a significant military capability

(unless the U.K. also joined). Meeting this requirement would require either a significant re-balancing of the posture of U.S. forces toward Europe or a massive investment of U.S. money into building the military capabilities of the members of the new alliance. While Americans may gripe with justification about the paltry defense spending and eroding military capabilities of NATO members such as Germany and Italy, both of these countries are military giants compared to the Baltic States, for example, and current NATO members also benefit from collective security backed by a total of 26 members, while the new alliance would probably have between eight and twelve members. So, while a “third way” approach that created a new collective security organization would address the problems identified in the “stay the course” approach, it would create its own set of problems, and these would likely be more serious than the problems it solved.

Conclusions

Our interests in Eurasia were defined previously as access to energy supplies, continuation of the security contributions and defense reform efforts of regional states, support for the political and economic transition processes underway there, and setting conditions for Russia’s own political and economic transformation. The ultimate objective for our regional policy, defined best by Zbigniew Brzezinski, is “to consolidate through a more genuine transatlantic partnership the U.S. bridgehead on the Eurasian continent so that an enlarging Europe can become a more viable springboard for projecting into Eurasia the international democratic and cooperative order”¹²⁹. As the analysis above makes clear, there is no simple policy option that painlessly advances all of our interests and gives us a certainty of achieving our ultimate objective. Any option chosen will inevitably mean that we accept risk in some areas while we advance in

others, and will require a considerable application of intellectual energy and political will – gone are the days when our policy toward Eurasia could safely be set on autopilot while we concentrated on other areas of the world.

But some of the options discussed are clearly superior to others. The idea of ceding to Russia its desired “zone of privileged interests” along its periphery is intellectually bankrupt and would be ultimately destabilizing for Europe and disastrous for our interests there. As discussed previously, it overstates Russia’s influence on other actors and other issues: there is little evidence that Russia could assist us on other issues if we ceased cultivating relationships with its neighbors. Second, this approach – where diplomats trade completely unrelated assets – is simply not practiced as a rule in foreign affairs. Third, despite its attempts to link its cooperation on certain issues with U.S. actions in other areas, Russia is already cooperating where its overriding interests drive it to do so and there is no evidence it would do more if we sacrifice our interests in the former Soviet Union on the altar of diplomatic deal-making. Fourth, such an approach would fatally undermine NATO’s credibility and could lead to a re-nationalization of European security and significant destabilization of the security situation there. And finally, history shows that accommodation of Russia by the West is often perceived as weakness by the former and results in more Russian demands instead of an increased desire to cooperate.

This third approach discussed, which envisions a U.S.-backed alternative security community comprising Georgia, Ukraine and NATO members of like mind with the United States, gives Georgia and Ukraine space and time to continue their Euro-Atlantic integration efforts while mitigating the effects of politically-motivated resistance to their

NATO integration by more skeptical members of the Alliance. Presumably, since they would already be members of an alternative security community backed by the United States, neither Georgia nor Ukraine would see NATO membership as the Holy Grail of integration. This arrangement could also serve as a vehicle for the West to ensure that the political and economic reform processes underway in these two countries continue, by tying the U.S. security guarantee to progress in these reforms. Finally, such an arrangement would significantly limit the opportunities for Russia to derail the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine by attempting to destabilize them and thus exploiting the doubts and fears about their integration among current Alliance members.

But this option also has significant downsides. It would essentially mean the end of NATO as the pre-eminent vehicle for Euro-Atlantic security and could open the way for a variety of competing security arrangements on the continent. It would also abandon common cause with much of Western Europe in our approach to security and thereby go a long way toward achieving the Russian goal of splitting the Euro-Atlantic partnership. Third, it would tempt Russia to test the limits of the U.S. security guarantee in an attempt to undermine confidence in it and increase its own leverage in the region. Finally, it would bind the U.S. in a security partnership with a group of relatively weak states, without the military and political power of Western Europe.

So, as unsatisfying as it might be for a paper of this length to conclude that we simply must stay the course to achieve our objectives, that is where the analysis leads us. But the term stay the course may be somewhat misleading - we must do more than simply more of the same. Our future success in protecting our vital interests while integrating Georgia, Ukraine and other Eurasian states, including Russia someday, into a true

transatlantic security community requires us to do the following. First, we need to affect changes in both U.S. and European attitudes and practices; second, we need to begin a process of intensive engagement with Russia designed to ensure understanding of our long-term objectives; third we need to ensure that Georgia and Ukraine enjoy the breathing space to continue reforms and we need to insist these reforms are genuine; and finally we need to examine and if necessary recalibrate our policies on other issues that impact our objectives in Eurasia – chief among them energy, arms control and human rights and democracy support.

Engaging Europe

As discussed, Russia's invasion of Georgia laid bare the divisions within NATO on its own enlargement and the role of Russia in European security. Healing these divisions will require intensive engagement and plenty of honest discussion between the U.S. and its European allies. There had long been a difference of opinion within NATO between a continental European group led by Germany and France that saw diplomacy and soft power as the most effective tools in international diplomacy, and a group led by the U.S. and U.K. that cautioned that diplomacy not backed by a credible military force would be ultimately unsuccessful. The first group sometimes derided the second as trigger-happy and the second group sometimes derided the first as toothless. The inclusion of Eastern European and former Soviet countries – close to Russia and with histories of Russian subjugation – into NATO only exacerbated these divisions, as this new group counseled that attempts to mollify Russia would lead to more aggressive Russian behavior. The lack of NATO response to the late-2007 cyber attacks was unsettling enough for them, but in the wake of the August war things came to a head.

Shortly after the war representatives from the Baltic countries bypassed NATO altogether and went straight to U.S. European Command to request a U.S. security commitment and a U.S.-led effort to develop a plan for their defense¹³⁰.

For NATO to remain relevant and to move forward with the integration of Georgia, Ukraine and other countries these divisions within the Alliance must be addressed. First, re-engaging with Europe will require the U.S. to put diplomacy first and force last in its approach to problems¹³¹. This would seem to be self-evident and of course is already the case – after all, what Western country has a policy of force first and diplomacy later? – but the U.S. nevertheless suffers from the image that it is too willing to resort to force to resolve problems before giving diplomacy a chance to work. We also suffer from the image that we are too willing to act unilaterally, and many Americans fail to understand the deep-seated discomfort with unilateral action among Europeans. Europe's own tragic history with the use of force to solve problems makes it deeply reluctant to use force, and unilateral use of force is even more distrusted by most Europeans, and especially Germans. The size of Germany's population and economy should mean that it is Europe's most powerful country militarily, but the combination of its demilitarization after World War II and the German memory of its failed past unilateral adventures makes the Germans suspicious of any action not blessed in advance by international bodies. Americans will need to keep these sensitivities in mind as we move forward with our European partners.

But Europe needs to do more to increase its military capabilities and the resoluteness of its diplomacy. Many Europeans have become accustomed to living under a U.S. security umbrella and therefore have invested too little in defense and developed

too little “hard power” capability; the absence of hard power therefore compels them to rely exclusively on soft power to approach problems and to criticize use of hard power by others. To turn a phrase on its head and apply it to much of Europe, “If you don’t have a hammer, nothing looks like a nail”. A study by the International Institute for Strategic Studies reports that only 2.7% of European military personnel can deploy abroad on crisis operations¹³². Although the insistence on the part of some countries – especially Germany – in relying on draftees, who are generally non-deployable, is part of the reason for this, a greater part of the reason is simple lack of investment in capability. European defense spending as a proportion of GDP is paltry – according to the CIA World Factbook the U.S. spends 4.06% of GDP on defense compared to 1.5% for Germany and 1.6% for the Netherlands. The U.K. and France do somewhat better – coming in at 2.4% and 2.6%¹³³ respectively, and it is no accident that these two countries are the only two European countries possessing military forces with actual strategic reach.

Ironically, given the historically uneven relations between the U.S. and France and especially the more recent low point of the Iraq war, France may represent the best chance to put some teeth back in European defense and to heal the divisions within NATO. President Sarkozy’s stated intent to bring France back within NATO’s military structures and return France to full Alliance membership should go a long way toward a full restoration of U.S.-French cooperation, which is crucial to improving U.S.-European relations in general¹³⁴. Such a rapprochement between the U.S. and France could lead to a revitalization of European security capabilities; the U.S. and France both understand the importance of hard power, and an emerging U.S.-French partnership would likely draw in the U.K.¹³⁵, since Great Britain would be interested in preserving its special relationship

with the U.S. Working together, these three countries might be able to move the rest of Europe in a more constructive direction on any number of European security issues, from energy – none of the three depend on Russia for a significant amount of their energy needs – to NATO enlargement, especially since a France in partnership with the U.S. and U.K. would not be as susceptible to German recalcitrance on both issues.

Engaging Russia

Obviously, a more unified transatlantic approach to security issues would be a tremendous advantage in dealing with Russia. Before the war in Georgia, Russian President Medvedev called for dialogue on a new approach to European security that would re-evaluate the efficiency of existing security organizations and structures and eventually result in a new legally binding European security treaty¹³⁶. While Medvedev's approach represents the most recent incarnation of the idea, a pan-European system of collective security was also a long-standing aim of the Soviet Union¹³⁷. As Craig Nation says, Vladimir Putin as president also proposed such an approach, “Putin advisors have articulated a vision of Eurasian order based upon a division of responsibilities between an enlarged European Union as a dominant force in the West and Russia as a renewed hegemonic leader in Eurasia”¹³⁸. From the Russian perspective, part of the logic of such an approach is its dilution of NATO’s influence as an organization and erosion of U.S. presence and power on the continent. Such an arrangement would also give Russia a formal voice in European security issues while advancing its desire for hegemony within the borders of the former Soviet Union - minus the new NATO members of course. Russia’s objective is a dual zone European security architecture, with the E.U., which Russia regards as squabbling, self-absorbed and therefore posing no threat to Russia’s

interests, regulating security within western Europe and Russia regulating security in the east. This outcome is obviously not in the interest of the United States or its European allies.

But agreeing to discuss Russia's idea is not the same as agreeing to its objectives. The West should take Russia up on its offer to open European security architecture for discussion. First, it is possible that in the interim between June, when Medvedev proposed these discussions, and now the economic free-fall and wholesale flight of foreign capital from Russia will have tamped down Russia's objectives and made Russia a more reasonable negotiating partner for the West. But even if this turns out not to be the case, renewed negotiations would serve a purpose. As Sestanovich says, "It is not easy to imagine a European security conference, now or in the future, in which Russia would not be isolated by its own behavior. Would anyone but Russia oppose the principle that all states are free to join alliances of their own choosing?"¹³⁹ In short, again to quote Sestanovich, "the process would not be a waste of time if it did nothing more than demonstrate that Russia's ideas and conduct are at odds with the opinions of all the other participants".¹⁴⁰ In this case, Russian behavior should serve to further strengthen Western solidarity about NATO's role as the pre-eminent security organization on the continent and to heal divisions within the Alliance on the question of enlargement.

Regarding NATO enlargement, Russia and the West suffer from an acute inability to understand each other. The West, and in particular the U.S., sees NATO enlargement as a means for extending an environment of security and stability to the east and for advancing processes of political and economic transformation. Westerners see NATO's

military capability as one aspect among several of the Alliance and understand that the requirement for unanimity among NATO's 26 members makes NATO-sanctioned military adventurism out of the question. Although the Russian political elite understands that NATO presents no military threat to Russia, it very well understands the threat to its own position represented by the decentralization of political and economic power entailed in the reforms that NATO aspirants undergo. Its response to this has been a relentless public information campaign designed to depict NATO as a military alliance directed against Russia. The result of this is that in Russia "even liberals perceive NATO enlargement as a reflection of the U.S. conclusion that Russia cannot be transformed, Russia's neighbors should be taken under the umbrella of NATO, and a new cordon sanitaire is needed between Russia and the West"¹⁴¹.

The only thing NATO can do in response to this is to expose the fallacy of this reasoning and to speak with one voice to the Russian government while using what limited means it has to speak directly to the Russian people about its true nature and intentions. NATO as an organization should continue to engage Russia and to attempt to reassure Russia that its enlargement is not directed against any country but is instead intended to extend the zone of Euro-Atlantic security and stability to the east. NATO should also periodically remind Russia that the door to NATO is open to Russia if Russia meets the objective requirements for membership. While at present the day when Russia is even willing to consider admitting a need to reform - much less undertaking such reform – seems far off, part of Russia's resistance to NATO enlargement is rooted in the sense that NATO would never admit Russia. Finally, NATO needs a Russia policy. It is shocking and almost inexcusable that 18 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union

NATO still has no guiding policy document to frame the relationship with its largest and most important neighbor. Lack of a policy on Russia opens the way for Russia to exploit daylight between Alliance members on key issues and also serves to sow confusion in Russia itself over what NATO's intentions toward it really are.

Georgia and Ukraine

As discussed, the two biggest drawbacks of the “stay the course” option from the perspectives of Georgia and Ukraine are the possibility of “reform fatigue” in both, as painful reforms are not seen to bring membership at an early date; and the problem of how to survive as independent entities until membership becomes a reality, given the almost certain Russian attempts to destabilize them as membership draws near. The United States and NATO have already undertaken efforts to deal with the first issue. The United States has concluded strategic partnership agreements with both Ukraine and Georgia since the August war and NATO has signed Annual National Programs (ANPs) with both countries. NATO staff officers describe the ANP as a document that frames more intensive cooperation between NATO and the subject countries and which contains many of the same steps contained in a Membership Action Plan (MAP)¹⁴², which has been the traditional path to membership. While the ANP is not “stealth MAP” – unlike MAP, it contains no promise of membership – it does promise closer cooperation with NATO and can be seen as marking another step in the membership process.

The strategic partnership agreement between the United States and Ukraine was signed on 19 December 2008; that between the United States and Georgia was signed on 9 January 2009. These documents express support for “each other’s sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders” and express intent to

“pursue a structured plan to increase interoperability and coordination of capabilities between NATO” and each of the two countries¹⁴³. In Georgia’s case, the charter also recalls the war with Russia and threats to peace and stability and pledges both sides to “expand the scope of their ongoing defense and security cooperation programs to defeat these threats and to promote peace and stability”¹⁴⁴. In a sense, the charters function as an early payoff for both Georgia and Ukraine and should mitigate the disappointment both certainly feel as NATO membership recedes farther into the future. The charters also commit all parties to work together to strengthen freedom of expression and good governance and – in Georgia’s case - increase political pluralism. Abiding by the provisions in these charters should ensure that both Georgia and Ukraine stay on the path of reform as they prepare for eventual NATO membership.

To deal with the second issue – that of Russian threats to the sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine – Western policy must contain both political and military dimensions. Politically, it would be useful for the European Union, under the auspices of the European Security and Defense Policy, to draft a statement declaring itself committed to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Georgia and Ukraine¹⁴⁵. The language used could be similar to that used in the U.S. strategic partnership agreements discussed above. The intent would not be to commit the EU to defending Georgia and Ukraine, but to send a signal to both these countries and Russia that the U.S. and the EU are united in their policy. This would remove the temptation for Russia to attempt to drive a wedge between the U.S. and the EU on this issue, and at a minimum it would give Russian political and military leaders something to consider if they were tempted to raise their level of interference in the internal affairs of Georgia or Ukraine.

Ukraine is generally thought to be capable of defending itself in case of outright war with Russia – at least long enough for the international community to mobilize itself. Georgia is entirely another matter. Given the damage done to its armed forces in the August war and the continued presence of large numbers of Russian troops and equipment in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia would need significant assistance in order to defend itself against a renewed Russia attack. This is something the U.S. must consider if it is serious about preparing Georgia to join NATO.

If the U.S. makes the decision to engage in a comprehensive program of rebuilding Georgia's military capability, it will be an expensive and long-term task to be sure. However, building a military capable of protecting Georgia's future sovereignty and territorial integrity is well within the capabilities of the U.S. armed forces. The capabilities required include secure command and control systems, an integrated air defense and air sovereignty system, a robust maritime defense capability, counter-artillery radar systems and a highly lethal anti-armor capability. All of these are capabilities the U.S. has in large quantity and that it has previously exported to allies and friends¹⁴⁶. The key integrating these capabilities would be a coherent military doctrine, something the U.S. would also have to assist Georgia in developing. Despite the inevitable outcry such a program would elicit from Russia, all the capabilities described above are purely defensive in nature and would no threat to Russian forces as long as they did not enter Georgia. And, as discussed previously, the advantage of such program once Georgia joined NATO would be that Georgia would be a contributor to Alliance security rather than a security liability.

Energy

Unless Europe deals with its over-reliance on Russian gas and Caspian and Central Asian gas shipped through Russia, the ability of European countries to craft an effective Russia policy will continue to be degraded. The dependence of European countries on Russian gas varies widely – from the near total dependence of Slovakia, Finland and Greece to France, Romania and Switzerland, which get a quarter or less of their gas from Russia¹⁴⁷. Among large European countries, Germany presents a special case. Although Germany gets only about 40% of its gas from Russia – about average for European countries - Gazprom owns a share of the domestic German gas pipeline, a share of the transit pipeline and sells directly to consumers there, giving it far more leverage than it would otherwise have¹⁴⁸. Former German government officials led by former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder are also on the payroll of the Russian energy industry – Schroeder chairs the board of the Nordstream Pipeline project, designed to bring gas directly from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea.

This situation leads Germany to be especially deferent to Russian viewpoints on a variety of matters, many completely unrelated to energy. Unless Germany deals with this situation its Russia policy will suffer in the long term. Germany does not, as least as of yet, seem aware that its dependence on Russian gas is matched by Russia's dependence on Germany as a transport country, or if it is aware, Germany does not seem willing to exploit its position even as Russia uses its energy for political purposes. While it is true that about 40% of Germany's gas needs are supplied by Russia, but it is also true that 40% of Russia's gas exports transit Germany, giving Germany a special position in the Russian distribution network¹⁴⁹. Despite Germany's general deference to Russia, there is

evidence that the government of Angela Merkl will toe a harder line on energy with Russia than did her predecessor Schroeder. Merkl rejected a proposal of then-President Putin to sell gas from the Shtockman field to Germany and rejected another Putin offer to make Germany the hub for distribution of Russian gas to Western Europe, replying that Germany and France intended to pursue an energy alliance within Western Europe. Later, she warned Moscow that since it was pursuing protectionist policies at home by refusing to allow western investment in Russia's oil and gas sector it was only natural that Europe should take reciprocal action¹⁵⁰.

One thing Europe could do to free itself from over-reliance on Russia is to give its full support to alternative pipeline projects. Russia is pushing hard, with German support, for the construction of the Nordstream and Southstream pipelines. We have already discussed Nordstream; Southstream would carry Russian gas under the Black Sea to Bulgaria and from there to Italy. Russia is also pushing for construction of the Bluestream Pipeline, which would run under the Black Sea to Turkey¹⁵¹. As discussed, Nordstream is designed to link Russia directly to Germany, bypassing the transit countries between them. Southstream and Bluestream have dual objectives: to bypass transit countries and to undercut the development of the Nabucco Pipeline, a Western-backed project designed to bring Caspian gas to Europe, bypassing Russia. In its early stages, Nabucco would transport only Azerbaijani gas to Europe, but in the future the pipeline's developers hope to secure Turkmen gas as well. Russia knows this and has been active attempting to ensure Nabucco is stillborn: in May 2007 Russia concluded an agreement to bring 20 billion cubic meters annually of Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Europe through Russia¹⁵², and recently Russia has been pressuring Azerbaijan not to

commit to ship its gas through Nabucco. Unless Nabucco's backers understand the game Russia is playing and are prepared to respond, their project could be in jeopardy.

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) is another method for Europe to decrease its dependence on gas controlled by Russia. But there are two problems with LNG from the European perspective. First, it requires the construction of processing units to liquefy the gas at the export site and reconvert it at the import site, which can be as expensive as building a pipeline¹⁵³; and second, the investments required mean that it is most often sold on the basis of long-term contracts – instead of on a spot market like oil - making it an inappropriate replacement for Russian gas if Russia turns off the taps¹⁵⁴. Nuclear energy and renewables are also alternatives – France, for example, generates 74% of its electricity from nuclear power¹⁵⁵ - but some European countries have committed to being nuclear free and renewables are a long-term project that often requires the conversion of energy infrastructure. Nevertheless, if Europe is to free its security policy from malign influence by Russia, it needs to support alternative pipelines, consider investing in LNG infrastructure and also consider nuclear and renewable options.

Arms Control and Missile Defense

The perception on the part of Russia that under the Bush administration the U.S. withdrew from the arms control dialogue and unilaterally abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty contributed to the deterioration of the bilateral relationship. The next year will bring an opportunity to undo that damage and make significant arms control progress. Both the Moscow Treaty (also known as the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, or SORT) and the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (START) expire in December 2009, and there are indications that both sides are interested in reducing the

number of deployed warheads below the limit of 2,200 envisioned in the SORT. The trick will be to get a new treaty in place by the time these two treaties expire, and this will be a tall order given the inevitable disruption brought about by the change in U.S. administrations.

One level down the nuclear ladder is the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which removed intermediate range nuclear weapons from Europe and placed a global cap of 100 warheads on intermediate range missiles. In February 2007 Russia hinted that it might pull out of the INF Treaty if the U.S. went ahead with its missile defense plans in Europe; recently Russia has indicated that if it stays in the treaty it wants it to have a multi-lateral or global character instead of applying to only Russia and the U.S. So progress in INF appears linked to the issue of missile defense. Lilia Shevtsova – no cheerleader for current Russian foreign and security policy – has described the missile defense issue as an example of “how to create a problem from nothing”. Shevtsova says that instead of exploring the US-NATO-Russia missile defense idea, which the Russians had been suggesting for several years, and without adequately consulting either Russia or its own European allies, the US announced its plans to put radars in the Czech Republic and interceptor missiles in Poland¹⁵⁶.

A re-thinking of this policy might pay dividends on the INF issue at a minimum and might assure Russia of U.S. good faith on other arms control issues. Americans tend to dismiss Russian concerns about missile defense by reminding Russia that the interceptor missiles are directed against Iran and pose no threat to Russia’s nuclear deterrent. While true, this argument fails to account for the Russian faith in U.S. technological prowess. Russia certainly knows that a missile defense system as currently

configured could not shoot down Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles, but it also believes that once the system is in place the U.S. will continue improving it until it might someday have that capability. We should not forget that while the Western press snickered about Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" system, it drove Soviet planners to apoplexy, since they assumed that the U.S. could easily develop such a system regardless of the technological challenge while they realized the Soviet Union was incapable of doing so itself. Russian analyst Sergei Rogov echoes this fear when he speaks about the current U.S. missile defense system by warning that the U.S. "is not going to stop at that, so more elements of the ABM system may be deployed later"¹⁵⁷. So some flexibility on missile defense might serve us well. As Sestanovich says, we might try to reach an agreement with Russia whereby we would not fully implement the plan if the missile threat from Iran (or another state) did not grow and that they would drop their objectives if the threat did grow¹⁵⁸.

The final – and probably most difficult – arms control issue is the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Russia has never been satisfied with certain aspects of this treaty, especially the limits on deployments of troops on the northern and southern flanks of Europe, and was never fully in compliance with them. Russia sees the flank limits as an infringement on its ability to move forces within the borders of the Russian Federation; Putin - referring to the flank limits – has called CFE the "colonial treaty". In July 2007 Putin notified the other treaty signatories that he intended to suspend Russia's implementation of the treaty. The Russian invasion of Georgia and continued deployment of Russian troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will further complicate a resuscitation of CFE or agreement on a follow-on treaty. But the U.S. should try

nevertheless. Even if we fail, we will at least have been seen to be willing to treat Russia as an equal on issues of importance to both sides and to have been willing to make important concessions. This would give us more credibility, especially in Europe, when we advocated toughness on issues where Russia opposes our objectives.

Human Rights and Democracy Support

Human rights and democracy support have long been one of the most emotionally-charged issues in the U.S.-Russian relationship. Recently, the perception, especially on the part of our European allies, that the U.S. was willing to suspend compliance with international law and suspend adherence to our own principles in pursuit of security objectives has significantly undermined our moral authority when dealing with human rights issues in and around Russia. The recently-announced closure of Guantanamo Bay and the ban on harsh interrogation methods will help to remedy this situation and undercut Russia's attempts to equate American and Russian behavior in response to American criticism of Russia's human rights record.

Our support for the development of democracy and civil society has also chafed in Russia, particularly among the political elite, who argue that it is an attempt to destabilize Russia from within. But support for the development of democracy and civil society is demonstrably in our interest and should be continued. Although Russia presents an especially tough case, given the attitude of the political elite and the resultant restrictions on the activities for foreign non-governmental organizations, it is not a hopeless situation. Serbia provides a useful example. There, Slobodan Milosevich had long tormented his neighbors and frustrated Europe by his bellicose nationalism, but his need for democratic legitimacy eventually led him to stand in elections which he lost in

the first round to Vojislav Kostunica. As James Traub says in his book The Freedom Agenda, Serbia's turn toward democracy was not simply due to the amount of money the West spent training election monitors and political parties or because of the methods used, but because "the forces of civil society proved powerful enough, and were willing to act bravely enough, to overcome the determined efforts of a dictator and to defy threats of violence"¹⁵⁹.

This is not to suggest that the development of civil society or political parties in Russia will be easy. The Russian political elite well understand the role of civil society and the threat that a true, independent civil society could represent to its maintenance of power. Therefore it has been busy creating and supporting youth groups and other civil society-type groups with close ties to the state. It has also passed a law banning foreign assistance to Russian political parties¹⁶⁰. But the West should continue to work on the margins of Russian society, attempting to develop civic consciousness and support groups independent of the Russian state. Concurrently we must maintain a dialogue with the Russian political leadership; while we must be willing to avoid letting cooperation in general be held hostage to human rights concerns, we must also tell the truth when we believe Russia is not living up to the standards of the modern community of nation-states within which it is so eager to secure a position of power. Shevtsova says that too often the West veers between pressuring Russia and being excessively accommodating, and remarks that "both approaches indirectly contribute to strengthening Russian authoritarianism, which has learned to exploit the West and its actions in the interest of self-preservation"¹⁶¹. Joseph Nye offers perhaps the best blueprint for our future engagement with Russia on the issues of human rights and democracy support when he

says, “A better approach would be to look to the long run, use the soft power of attraction, expand exchanges and contacts with Russia’s new generation, support its participation in the WTO and other market institutions and address deficiencies with specific criticism rather than general harangues or isolation”¹⁶².

Summary

The Russian invasion of Georgia was the most significant event of 2008 in the area of European security. Although some of the factors that led Russia and Georgia to war grew out of the unique history of Georgia and its separatist conflicts, many more were the result of deliberate Russian attempts to set the conditions for crisis in the Caucasus and thereby undercut NATO’s enlargement efforts, threaten energy corridors that bypass Russia and demonstrate its power in its self-described “Near Abroad”, all of which amount to threats to U.S. interests. Moving forward in a productive manner and defending our interests in Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic Community requires us to maintain our efforts to integrate Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. Success in this endeavor will require us to intensify our engagement with both Europe and Russia, to mitigate threats of “reform fatigue” in Georgia and Ukraine and to parry Russian attempts to destabilize them, and to examine and possibly recalibrate our policies on a range of issues from the European energy supply to arms control and missile defense to human rights and democracy support. This effort will not be easy and it will not be cheap, but if successful it will bring into reality Brzezinski’s vision of a genuine transatlantic partnership that projects into Eurasia the international cooperative and democratic order. The consequences of this outcome for security, stability and prosperity of the West and eventually the world would be profound.

Endnotes

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⁷ Marshall I. Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

⁸ Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, (Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 132.

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¹⁰ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 134-135.

¹¹ Ibid, 2

¹² Ibid, 99

¹³ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 167.

¹⁴ Eugene Rumer and Celeste Wallender, (Eds.), *Russia Watch* (Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 53.

¹⁵ *Infoplease Homepage*, <http://www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/2008-transparency-international-corruption-perceptions.html>, (accessed 2 March 2009). Ukraine fared slightly better than Russia on the survey, coming in at 134th, Georgia fared significantly better, at 67th, and Azerbaijan - another hydrocarbon-based economy – actually fared slightly worse, at 158th.

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¹⁸ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 137.

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²⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 132.

²¹ Georgeta Pourchot, *Eurasia Rising: Democracy and Independence in the Post-Soviet Space*, (Westport, CT, Praeger Security International, 2008), 84-85.

²² Ibid, 95.

²³ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 150-151.

²⁴ Pourchot, *Eurasia Rising: Democracy and Independence in the Post-Soviet Space*, 88.

²⁵ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 9.

²⁶ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, 46.

²⁷ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 149.

²⁸ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 146.

²⁹ *Freedom House Homepage*, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008> (accessed 10 February 2009). For comparison, Ukraine is listed as “free” while Russia and Azerbaijan are listed as “not free”.

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³¹ *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Homepage*, http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2008/05/31268_en.pdf, (accessed 10 February 2009).

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³⁶ Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 72.

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⁴¹ Ibid, 32.

⁴² Ibid, 144.

⁴³ Thomas Goltz, *Georgia Diary: A Chronicle of War and Political Chaos in the Post-Soviet Caucasus* (Armonk, NY, 2006), 51.

⁴⁴ Christoph Zuercher, *The Post-Soviet Wars*, (New York, New York University Press, 2007), 23.

⁴⁵ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, 43.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 42.

⁴⁷ Zuercher, *The Post-Soviet Wars*, 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁴⁹ Goltz, *Georgia Diary: A Chronicle of War and Political Chaos in the Post-Soviet Caucasus*, 43.

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⁵² Ibid.

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⁵⁴ Ibid, 124.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 125.

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⁵⁷ Wikipedia Home Page, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Ossetia#1989-2008, (accessed 13 February 2009).

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⁶³ Ibid, 121.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 122-124.

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⁹⁴ Ibid, 115.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 143.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 119.

⁹⁷ Rumer and Wallender, *Russia Watch*, 39.

⁹⁸ Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, 17.

⁹⁹ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, 116.

¹⁰⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 174.

¹⁰¹ Some of these organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Transparency International, criticize the U.S. and its allies when it feels they do not measure up to their own standards, but this still does not shield them from being accused of being agents of the U.S. intent upon bringing down the Russian state.

¹⁰² Rumer and Wallender, *Russia Watch*, 33.

¹⁰³ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, 203-204.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 117.

¹⁰⁶ de Deugd, *Ukraine and NATO: The Policy and Practice of Co-operating with the Euro-Atlantic Security Community*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Afghanistan is another issue that challenges NATO, but its effect on Alliance cohesion is probably not as great as that of the Georgia (and Ukraine) question. All NATO members generally agree that the Afghan mission is worth doing, but differ over levels of individual national commitment. When it comes to Georgia, there is a group of members, led by Germany, France and the Netherlands, which increasingly believes the April declaration was a mistake; this group is opposed by a group believing that the accession of Georgia and Ukraine is now more important than ever.

¹⁰⁹Stephen Sestanovich, “Washington’s Choices”, in *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2008, 15.

¹¹⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 251.

¹¹¹ Sestanovich, “Washington’s Choices”, 14-15.

¹¹² Kagan, *the Return of History and the End of Dreams*, 85.

¹¹³ British Broadcasting Company Home Page, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5284938.stm>, (accessed 24 February 2009).

¹¹⁴ Rumer and Wallender, *Russia Watch*, 73-74

¹¹⁵ Janus Bugajski, *The Eastern Dimension of America’s New European Allies*, (Carlisle, PA, U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, October, 2007), 1.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Embassy-Kiev and Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 12 December 2008; Georgian Ministry of Defense and Joint Staff officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 14-15 December, 2008; NATO International Staff and U.S. Delegation to NATO officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 1717 February 2009.

¹¹⁷U.S. Embassy-Kiev and Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 12 December 2008.

¹¹⁸ Allison, Light and White, *Putin’s Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, 4.

¹¹⁹ NATO International Staff and U.S. Delegation to NATO officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 1717 February 2009.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official (identity withheld by request), Interview by author, 12 December 2008.

¹²² Quentin Peel, “Crisis in Kyiv Tests Patience of Berlin and Moscow”, <http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-302428.html>, (accessed 25 February 2009).

¹²³ Phillip P. Pan, “Georgia: Russia is Stoking Tensions”, *The Washington Post*, February 22, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/21/AR2009022101752.html>, (accessed 25 February 2009).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 213.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 220.

¹²⁷ John Corry, “TV: Pershing II and West Germany”, *The New York Times*, December 28, 1983, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F07EFD71538F93BA15751C1A965948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>, (accessed 25 February 2009).

¹²⁸No author given, *Transatlantic Trends 2008*, (German Marshall Fund of the U.S. and the Compagnia de San Paulo, 2008), 11-12.

¹²⁹ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, 86.

¹³⁰ NATO International Staff and U.S. Delegation to NATO officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 1717 February 2009.

¹³¹ Steven Phillip Kramer, “The Absence of Europe: Implications for International Security”, *Strategic Forum No. 235*, October 2008, 1.

¹³² Ibid, 2.

¹³³ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Home Page, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html>, (accessed 26 February 2009).

¹³⁴ Kramer, “The Absence of Europe: Implications for International Security”, , 1.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 5.

¹³⁶ Russian News and Information Agency (RIA-Novosti) Home Page, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20081008/117594621.html>, accessed 26 February 2009.

¹³⁷ Allison, Light and White, *Putin’s Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, 2.

¹³⁸ Nation and Trenin, *Russian Security Strategy Under Putin: U.S. and Russian Perspectives*, 4.

¹³⁹ Sestanovich, “Washington’s Choices”, 27.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 28.

¹⁴¹ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 205.

¹⁴² NATO International Staff and U.S. Delegation to NATO officials (identities withheld by request), Interviews by author, 1717 February 2009.

¹⁴³ U.S. Department of State, *United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership*, 19 December 2008, and U.S. Department of State, *United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership*, 9 January 2009.

¹⁴⁴ *United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership*, 9 January 2009.

¹⁴⁵ This idea was expressed to me by a member of the U.S. Delegation to NATO in an interview on 17 February 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Taken with minor changes from Hamilton, “A Resolute Strategy on Georgia”.

¹⁴⁷ The Heritage Foundation Home Page, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/bg2083.cfm>, (accessed 27 February 2009).

¹⁴⁸ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 153.

¹⁴⁹ The Economist Home Page, “Cold Comfort”, http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12052710, (accessed 2 March, 2009).

¹⁵⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 138-139.

¹⁵¹ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 156.

¹⁵² Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 145.

¹⁵³ Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, 138-139.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 179.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 137.

¹⁵⁶ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 251.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 252.

¹⁵⁸ Sestanovich, “Washington’s Choices”, 20.

¹⁵⁹ James Traub, *The Freedom Agenda: Why America Must Spread Democracy (Just Not the Way George Bush Did)*, (New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2008), 83.

¹⁶⁰ Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, 307.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 312.

¹⁶² Ibid, 309.

